United Nations A/60/PV.50

# General Assembly

Sixtieth session

*Official Records*

**50**th plenary meeting
Friday, 11 November 2005, 3 p.m.
New York

*President:* Mr. Eliasson ..... (Sweden)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Diarra (Mali) took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.*

**Agenda items 9 and 117 *(continued)***

**Report of the Security Council (A/60/2)**

**Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters**

**Mr. Oshima** (Japan): We condemn terrorism in all its forms, whenever and wherever it occurs. Please allow me at the outset to express Japan's sympathy and deep condolences to the families of the victims and to the people and the Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in connection with the recent tragedy caused by the heinous terrorist attacks in Amman.

As we intensify our efforts on some critical issues in the implementation of the 2005 World Summit Outcome, such as the Peacebuilding Commission, the Human Rights Council, and management reform, under the strong and able leadership of Mr. Eliasson, my delegation looks forward to seeing him demonstrate the same leadership in guiding us on another major issue, that of reform of the Security Council, further building on what was achieved under his predecessor, Foreign Minister Jean Ping of Gabon, during the previous session.

My delegation wishes also to acknowledge with thanks the tireless efforts and important contributions made by Ambassadors Paulette Bethel of the Bahamas and Christian Wenaweser of Liechtenstein, as co-Vice-Chairpersons of the Open-ended Working Group.

My delegation attaches great importance to this joint debate on the two items under consideration — the annual report on the activities of the Security Council and reform of the Security Council — as it provides a timely and useful opportunity to reflect on the way forward on the key issues involved here, namely the Security Council's structural reform and improvement of its working methods.

First, I wish to touch briefly on the annual report that was presented by Ambassador Andrey Denisov of the Russian Federation, the President of the Council, to whom I wish to express our appreciation. Japan, as a serving member on the Council for this year and next, welcomes the report. The report covers the full range of the Council's activities, which have become increasingly diverse and complex, reflecting the new challenges facing today's world in the area of peace and security.

Since Japan has the honour to serve as the Chair of the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations established within the Council, I wish to add a few words to supplement the section dealing with peacekeeping operations. As the report succinctly states, the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations has been trying to be more proactive in its work in order to ensure a more focused debate and closer

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attention to key issues through, first, more frequent meetings with troop-contributing countries, major financial contributors and other stakeholders to improve cooperation and understanding among key actors; secondly, timely and focused debates on certain thematic issues of major concern, such as sexual exploitation and abuse in the context of specific United Nations peacekeeping missions; and, thirdly, improved information-sharing and coordination of work between the Council's Working Group and the General Assembly's Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations to achieve the complementary relationship that should exist between the two bodies. This is very much a work in progress, and I intend to follow it through with the cooperation of all those actively involved in the work of peacekeeping operations.

I might mention in this connection that I have just concluded a field mission, in my capacity as Chairman of the Working Group and with the backing of the Council, to Ethiopia and Eritrea. I met with the representatives of the mission deployed there — the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) — and the troop-contributing countries, as well as military commanders, in order to be apprised firsthand of the worrisome situation that is developing along the border. I am reporting my findings back to the Council and its Working Group.

Reform of the Security Council, in terms of expanding its membership and improving its working methods, is long overdue. World leaders recognized that fact in their Millennium Declaration five years ago, and they have done so again this year in a clearer and more definitive way in the outcome document.

As we are repeatedly reminded, the challenges that today face the United Nations as a whole and the Security Council in particular are vastly different from those of 1945. The basic structure and composition of the Security Council, however, essentially continues to reflect the world as it was 60 years ago. To be effective, it must be changed to better reflect the realities of today's world. In recognition of this, our leaders affirmed, at the world summit in September, that early reform of the Security Council is an essential element of our overall efforts to reform the United Nations. The primordial task for Member States now is to act and deliver on that conviction in the form of concrete solutions.

First, we have advocated the expansion of the Security Council to reflect the realities of the twenty-first century, with the inclusion, on a permanent basis, of Member States that have the manifest will and real capacity to take on a major role in the maintenance of international peace and security. That position has come to be shared by a large number of Member States. This must happen if the Security Council is to remain effective and relevant. Few disagree with the logic and rationale for such action. In 1946, for example, approximately 70 per cent of the budget resources required by the Organization came from the Permanent Five members, which thus provided a solid power base for making decisions and ensuring that those decisions would be implemented effectively.

In 2005, by contrast, that percentage has declined to only about 37 per cent of the Organization's current regular budget and to about 45 per cent of its peacekeeping operations budget. This significant shift in the balance of power and resources — among other factors — calls for and justifies an expansion of the Council's membership that will truly enhance the effectiveness of its collective action. Expansion will also have to be carried out in ways that will maintain the efficiency of the Council's work.

Secondly, and no less important, improving the working methods of the Security Council has been an important concern for all Member States, small and large, and that too must be addressed. We acknowledge and welcome certain progress made in recent years in the Security Council, but more needs to be done. To that end, we believe that three things must go together.

First, the General Assembly has a legitimate role in seeking improvement of the Council's working methods, as it has indeed tried to do for more than a decade through the Open-ended Working Group that it established under resolution 48/26. Unfortunately, those deliberations have so far failed to produce tangible, agreed results. The time has come, however, to exert real effort to harvest what can now be harvested in that regard. At the same time, we must effect changes in the Council's composition, demonstrating our collective pragmatism and flexibility in the pursuit of our common commitment.

Another key factor related to achieving improvement in the Security Council's working methods is the direct responsibility of the Council itself. As master of its own rules and procedures under

the provisions of the Charter, the Council is responsible for any decision in that area. That being recognized, we believe that the Council is expected to act and to do more in response to the concerns of a large portion of the General Assembly membership. In that regard, reactivation of the Council's informal working group on documentation and other procedural questions should be considered, among other measures, as a step towards achieving improvement in its working methods. All members of the Council must be engaged on this matter, but we expect greater responsiveness and activism from the five permanent members because of their special role and the responsibility incumbent upon them by reason of their permanent status and the privileges and influence associated with it.

Thirdly, we believe that an expansion of the Council's membership, particularly of the permanent category, would also be a relevant and important — albeit indirect — factor in bringing about changes and improvements in the Council's working methods, including by breathing new life into its modus operandi, because its impact would no doubt be felt.

With regard to changing the structure and composition of the Security Council, we believe that we achieved quite significant progress during the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, as partly reflected in the 2005 World Summit Outcome (*resolution 60/1*). Particularly noteworthy is the fact that for the first time in the Organization's history, several draft resolutions were submitted to the Assembly calling for significant changes in the Council's composition.

The group of four countries — Brazil, Germany, India and Japan — supported by many other sponsors, submitted a draft resolution (*A/59/L.64*) on Security Council reform that includes expansion in the permanent and the non-permanent categories. That effort, together with other subsequent actions — including, notably, by the African States — has created a momentum in the General Assembly in New York and in world capitals for fundamental structural reform of the Security Council on a scale unprecedented in recent United Nations history.

The efforts made by the group of four and the other sponsors enjoyed the broad support of Member States, and we would like to take this opportunity to express once again Japan's heartfelt appreciation to those who have supported our efforts. I wish in particular to express, on behalf of my Government, our sincere thanks to all those countries that have expressed their support for a permanent seat for Japan.

The momentum thus created has not gone away; it has sustained itself and now demands a concrete outcome. That will be our new task in the next stage of the process in which we now find ourselves following the world summit. In this second stage, building on the momentum created at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, we need to look beyond the fact that none of the draft resolutions submitted last session was put to a vote, and seek a solution that can command broader support than has been possible thus far.

There are those who want to conclude that Security Council reform is over. They are mistaken. Reform is a process, and it moves in a continuum, step by step. That is particularly true with regard to such a sensitive, challenging endeavour as reform of the Council that tries to address fundamental changes in its composition. No effort should be spared to move this arduous process forward.

Japan is determined to continue to work, on the basis of the building blocks already laid down and in cooperation with all interested States, to move the process forward and to arrive at a solution that is broadly acceptable to the membership. For the first time in United Nations history, there is a real prospect that bold action can result in a concrete solution during the present session of the General Assembly, along with agreement on other, larger United Nations reform issues. That will no doubt require greater activism, realism, innovation and imagination on the part of all individual States and groups of States interested in the matter. We call upon all Member States to take an early decision on Security Council reform within the current session of the General Assembly. As Prime Minister Koizumi stated at the 2005 world summit, "Let us all unite in an endeavour to make this session of the General Assembly a session for action: action to achieve the comprehensive renewal of the United Nations" (*A/60/PV.6, p. 36*).

In closing, we would like to reiterate that Japan will spare no effort to achieve the goal of overall United Nations reform. We look forward to working hard towards that goal, under the strong leadership of

the President, during this historic session of the General Assembly.

**Mr. Faaborg-Andersen** (Denmark): I thank the President for convening this meeting of the General Assembly. I would like to express my delegation's gratitude for his strong effort to push forward the United Nations reform agenda.

Denmark believes that the composition of the Security Council must reflect the world as it looks today. Facing the challenges of the twenty-first century requires the enhanced legitimacy, credibility and effectiveness for the Council's work.

The present composition of the Security Council is a reflection of a world that no longer exists. If the Council is to continue to play a decisive role in the promotion of peace, security, human rights and democracy, broader representation is needed. In recent months, a broad majority of Member States have demonstrated clear support for reform and expansion of the Security Council. Furthermore, the 2005 World Summit Outcome (*resolution 60/1*) sets out a specific task for us to carry out in that regard.

When it comes to Council reform, we are not starting from scratch. It is not a clean-slate situation: there are certain given facts. Among them is that the Council consists of both permanent and non-permanent members and that the permanent members have certain privileges, most notably the veto power.

In our view, it is not realistic — and perhaps not even desirable — to attempt to change those basic attributes of the Council. They are, after all, no small part of the reason why the Council has survived and played a significant role during the past 60 years. Instead, our efforts should be aimed at levelling the playing field in the Council by ensuring a better overall balance in both categories of membership among countries from various geographical regions having different levels of economic development.

There can be no denying that permanent membership confers considerable advantages: better institutional memory, greater mastery of the game, et cetera. As a current non-permanent member of the Security Council, Denmark can certainly testify to that. Adding additional permanent members, particularly from the developing countries, will thus ensure a more level playing field. That having been said, we see no reason why there should be an expansion in the number of veto-carrying permanent members.

It is for those reasons that Denmark has for many years been supporting a model of expansion according to which both the number of non-veto-carrying permanent members and the number of non-permanent seats in the Council would be increased, and both developing and developed countries would hold seats as permanent members. That basic approach was reflected in the proposal of the group of four countries, which we sponsored. We still believe that that proposal is the only one that will be able to gather broad support among the membership.

The reform of the Security Council goes far beyond the question of the expansion of the membership. It is also very much a matter of addressing issues concerning the working methods and operation of the Council. There is a need for more transparency and inclusiveness in the work of the Security Council vis-à-vis the general membership; a large measure of agreement on practical steps in that direction has already been achieved in the Open-ended Working Group.

Another aspect of reform relates to the need for change in the organization of work within the Council itself, including rationalization of the way in which the Council conducts its deliberations, et cetera. Such reform measures are long overdue and, simply put, are an imperative if an expanded Security Council is to be able to work efficiently.

A comprehensive reform approach that covers both enlargement and working methods is needed, and we should not attempt to deal with those issues sequentially or separately in a piecemeal manner. Much is at stake, and we all share the same goal: the need for a stronger and more efficient United Nations.

The issue of Security Council reform has been on the agenda for more than 12 years. The time for reflection is over and the time for action has arrived. It is our responsibility to send a clear message to the world saying that we want a stronger United Nations, capable of addressing the new threats and challenges that the world is facing today.

**Ms. Hřebičková** (Czech Republic): I should like first of all to express sincere sympathy and condolences, on behalf of the Czech people and the Czech Government, to the people and the Government

of Jordan in connection with the terrorist attacks that took place the day before yesterday in Amman. We condemn terrorism in all its forms.

We probably all agree that the reform and expansion of the Security Council is long overdue. Such reform — which would make the Security Council a more representative, transparent and efficient body — has been rightly seen as a key element of overall United Nations reform; a wave of hope in that regard was generated in the course of the preparations for this year's United Nations summit.

However, the issue proved to be too difficult to be resolved as part of the summit outcome, despite the fact that we were closer than ever to finding a reasonable approach, one which would garner broad support in the General Assembly, an option second best to a — clearly elusive — consensus.

Our views on Security Council reform are well known. The Czech Republic has consistently supported enlargement of the Security Council in both categories of membership — that is, in the permanent member category as well as in the elected member category. That naturally places us in the camp of supporters of the draft resolution presented earlier this year by the group of four countries. There are a number of reasons for that. The key one for the Czech Republic is that the group seeks to substantively enhance the representation of developing countries. We continue to believe that that proposal offers a viable model for the Council's expansion — a model that still has the potential to gain the support of the required majority of Member States.

As we undertake efforts to expand the Council, we should not lose sight of reform in the area of working methods. In this context, we find the Swiss initiative and proposal to be very inspiring. However, owing to the complexity and sensitivity of these questions, including the possibility that they might interfere with other reform issues, it seems that further careful consideration of the proposal is necessary. The Czech Republic and the Czech delegation is ready to take part in that effort too.

**Mr. Dabbashi** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset to express our heartfelt condolences to the Government and the brotherly people of Jordan in connection with the terrorist attacks that took place in Amman two days ago.

I would like to express our support for the statement made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of African States.

Developing countries have understood for many decades that there is an imbalance in the Security Council membership, and have worked since the 1970s to redress the imbalance, including through the inclusion of this item on the agenda of the General Assembly at its thirty-fourth session, in 1979. However, the powers that be, which are interested in maintaining the status quo, did not allow the General Assembly to consider the item seriously until the forty-seventh session, in 1992. In 1993, the General Assembly adopted resolution 48/26, by which it established an Open-ended Working Group to consider the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council.

However, as we all know, the efforts of the Working Group came to a dead end as a result of privileged Council members' insistence on keeping their privileges. When we speak of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters, we should seriously consider all the factors that affect the performance of the Security Council and prevent it from carrying out its mandate to maintain international peace and security, in particular the right of veto, which only the permanent Council members enjoy.

None of us can deny that the current situation in the Security Council is a result of the outcome of the Second World War. It is a situation that was imposed on the entire international community by the victors in that war. They controlled the Security Council and made it the predominant body, inequitable, imbalanced and lacking democracy, where the right of veto is abused and where international problems are dealt with selectively and in a discriminatory way. In most cases, aggressors are protected and granted impunity, while sanctions are unjustly imposed on countries that do nothing to deserve them, for no other reason than that their policies do not serve the interests of some of those privileged members of the Council. Because of the veto power, the United Nations has been unable to uphold justice among peoples. Reform of the Security Council has thus become more urgent than ever.

The African continent has suffered the most as a result of the arrangements put in place following the Second World War, including the establishment of the

Security Council, from which most of the countries of the continent, then under colonialist Powers and racism, were completely excluded. Now that African countries have attained their independence, having made incredible sacrifices and after long suffering, and since they constitute one fourth of the international community represented in the United Nations, they must have justice. They deserve recognition of their rights and they deserve redress of the historic injustice they have endured, through an opportunity for equitable representation in the Security Council. Equitable representation for the African continent means it must have permanent membership of the Council, just as other continents do. Even without comprehensive reform of the Security Council, the African continent should also be granted a number of non-permanent seats commensurate with its number of Members of the United Nations.

Libya, as a member of the African Union, holds firm in its support for the unified African position taken at the fifth ordinary session of the Assembly of the African Union, held in Sirte, Libya, on 4 and 5 July 2005, a position reiterated in the two extraordinary summits of the African Union, held in Addis Ababa on 4 August and 31 October 2005. That African position stipulates that two permanent seats, with all the privileges — including, I stress, veto power — and five non-permanent seats, should be granted to Africa. We in Libya would prefer Africa's permanent seats to be allocated to the African Union rather than to any specific country, and to be rotated, as was decided at the African summit held in Harare in 1997.

The African continent does not wish and will not accept to be the loser in whatever arrangements are made regarding the increase in Security Council membership. The African continent has a right to all the privileges enjoyed by other continents. The equation here is very simple: either all have privileges or no one has privileges, and by this I mean in particular the veto power. When veto power in the Security Council is abolished, that will be the beginning of genuine reform of the Security Council and of the United Nations as a whole.

Although we recognize that the Security Council has achieved some success in making peace and preventing conflicts, particularly in Africa, we are disappointed and frustrated by the Council's inability so far to adopt any measure to protect the Palestinian people from suffering at the hands of the occupying Power, or to assist the Palestinian people in regaining their territories and enable them to achieve their inalienable rights, particularly the right of return, the right to self-determination and the right to establish an independent State of their own throughout their territory.

**Mr. Salgueiro** (Portugal): I would like to extend my Government's and my own most sincere condolences to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and to its people on the loss of life and the casualties that resulted from the horrendous terrorist acts in Amman.

I would like to start by thanking the President for convening this very timely meeting. We are halfway between the September High-level Plenary Meeting and the end of the year, when we will have to review progress on the crucial issue of Security Council reform.

During the last session of the General Assembly, and for the first time since the establishment of the Open-ended Working Group more than 10 years ago, three draft resolutions were submitted on the question of Security Council reform. Besides that, a number of States have put forward concrete ideas on this issue. All this is an indication that the need for Security Council reform is widely acknowledged in this Assembly. This was confirmed at the September summit by our heads of State or Government, who considered "early reform of the Security Council [to be] an essential element of our overall effort to reform the United Nations" (*resolution 60/1, para. 153*).

As is well known to the Assembly, Portugal was a sponsor of draft resolution A/59/L.64, submitted earlier this year by the group of four countries and others. We continue to stand by the principles of that draft resolution and to consider that reform along the lines laid out in it provides the best answer for adapting the Security Council and the United Nations to the twenty-first century.

Allow me once again to reiterate briefly our guiding principles on this important issue of Security Council reform. First, reform, in our opinion, must comprise concrete and ambitious proposals, both on the matter of enlargement and on that of working methods. We fully understand and accept that in many circumstances the Security Council needs to work with discretion. But the Council acts on behalf of the international community, and we all have to feel that we have a stake in its deliberations. The fact is that a

working culture for which the Charter did not provide has developed over the years in the relationship between the Security Council and the membership at large, as well as with the Secretariat. This working culture has been an object of criticism. We believe that a decisive improvement in this situation demands action through joint structural and working-methods reforms. Expansion and working methods are two sides of the same coin.

Secondly, enlargement should take place in the existing two categories of permanent and non-permanent members, providing for more and better representativity of the wider membership in the Security Council. That would pave the way for an increased presence by developing countries in both categories and would allow Africa to accede to permanent membership. In addition, preserving the impediment to the immediate re-election of non-permanent members would guarantee a chance of accession to the Council for the vast majority of the United Nations membership, comprising more than 100 small and medium-sized States.

Concerning the question of the veto, our long-standing position is that the requirement for concurring votes — established in Article 27, paragraph 3, of the Charter — should not be expanded beyond the current permanent members of the Security Council.

Finally, Portugal believes that, whatever reforms we may carry out at present, a review exercise should be conducted at a specified time in the future — for example, within 15 years — in order to assess the merits of those reforms and their impact on the work of the Organization.

I would like to conclude by expressing the hope that by the end of the year, we will be in a position to report concrete progress on Security Council reform. It is my firm belief that reasonable, clear and democratic reform is likely to gather sufficient support in the General Assembly. A Security Council that reflects the realities of today's world would bring a new momentum to the work of the Organization.

**Mrs. Papadopoulou** (Greece): Please allow me at the outset to express my country's deep condolences to the people and the Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan as well as to the families of the victims of the tragedy caused by the horrendous terrorist attacks in Amman. Greece condemns terrorism in all its forms, whenever and wherever it occurs.

Heads of State or Government, at their summit last September, agreed that there is a need for reform of the United Nations to make it reflect the realities of today's world. Reform has been discussed for the past 12 years in a Working Group specifically created for that purpose. In the past 12 months, further extensive debate has been under way within the United Nations as well as in academic and political circles, in non-governmental organizations and in the media.

With specific regard to Security Council reform, three draft resolutions have been submitted (A/59/L.64, L.67 and L.68), and it is clear that consensus — although highly desirable — is extremely difficult to achieve. That having been said, we believe that insisting at this stage on taking a decision by consensus on this particular issue would only perpetuate the current impasse. In our national parliaments, decisions are made every day on serious — indeed, crucial — issues without consensus.

In all our previous statements on this issue, we have clearly expressed our support for the principles set out in draft resolution A/59/L.64, which we joined in sponsoring. In our view, that approach to the problem is the most realistic one. Expanding the number of permanent and non-permanent members is essential to achieve balance in the Security Council. It would increase the Council's accountability and transparency, enhancing its multicultural and multidimensional character and making it more representative of the world we live in. It would strengthen the Council's credibility and legitimacy and therefore its effectiveness.

In order to effectively face today's serious global threats and challenges, the United Nations — in particular the Security Council — must be urgently reformed and modernized. If we want the Organization to continue to play a crucial and decisive role in the twenty-first century, decisions on these matters cannot be further delayed. This is a time for action, and we must not lose the current momentum.

**Mr. Loizaga** (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Permit me at the outset to express, on behalf of the people and the Government of Paraguay, our heartfelt condolences to the people and the Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on the criminal terrorist attacks committed on Wednesday in Amman, which claimed the lives of innocent civilians. We condemn

such cowardly criminal acts, which have no justification whatsoever.

This plenary meeting is devoted to considering agenda items 9 and 117, which refer both to the report of the Security Council (*A/60/2*) and to the report of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council (*A/59/47*).

With regard to the report of the Council, my delegation acknowledges that progress has been made in its presentation but believes that it should be improved further, given the substantial increase in the Council's agenda. That would enable Member States and international public opinion alike to analyse and substantively assess the Council's work and to understand the basis of the decisions taken. We also believe that an interactive General Assembly debate on the report between members and non-members of the Council would strengthen the Organization.

We make that observation because, in our view, Member States' consideration of the report should not be limited to a mere formality, but rather should be a reaffirmation of the Assembly's responsibility for issues of fundamental importance for the entire membership of the Organization. Member States have the right and the duty to be familiar with and fully analyse the Council's work, because the Council acts on behalf of everyone under the mandate entrusted to it in the Charter of the Organization.

Moreover, we should like to highlight the progress made in the open meetings held by the Security Council in recent years, which have enabled non-members to express to the Council their points of view on topics of general interest and great importance. However, Member States very often feel that their views are not taken into account when decisions are taken. In addition, we wish to express once again our delegation's concern at the legislative role being played by the Security Council, to the detriment of the General Assembly's authority.

In the outcome document of the recent world summit, our heads of State or Government devoted a special section to the Security Council, in which they expressed their support for

> "early reform of the Security Council — an essential element of our overall effort to reform the United Nations — in order to make it more broadly representative, efficient and transparent and thus to further enhance its effectiveness and the legitimacy and implementation of its decisions". (*resolution 60/1, para. 153*)

Paraguay has therefore been carefully following initiatives to reform the Security Council both with regard to its composition and to its working methods, because our Organization is an instrument of the international community which must evolve and adapt itself to the realities of the new century.

The Republic of Paraguay reiterates its position in favour of an increase in the number of Security Council members. It is essential that in effecting such an increase we take into account today's political reality and the increase in the number of States Members of the Organization.

In order to bring about a Security Council that is more democratic and representative, we must enlarge both categories of members — permanent and non-permanent — and must include both developed and developing countries, taking into consideration the fact that the latter are underrepresented in that important organ. The increase in the number of Council members will make that body more representative and will thus give it greater legitimacy.

Likewise, as a fundamental part of that reform, we should also study the right of veto. We should aspire to a gradual elimination of the veto until it disappears completely. As a first step, it should be strictly limited to matters under Chapter VII of the Charter. Likewise, we could also leave open the possibility of a periodic review of the reform, in order to analyse the functioning of the Security Council in the light of the needs and realities that arise.

My delegation also feels that due consideration should be given to any suggestion that will improve the working methods of the Security Council, make the Council more transparent and responsible and ensure greater participation by all Member States. For that reason, the proposal on the reform of the working methods of the Council circulated by the delegations of Costa Rica, Jordan, Liechtenstein, Singapore and Switzerland is an important contribution containing elements that will enhance the debate on that subject. Paraguay feels that enlargement of the Council and reform of its working methods must be addressed as one comprehensive package.

No reform of the United Nations will have the effect we all desire, without the long overdue reform of the Security Council. Until that occurs, we will not be able to speak of an Organization in step with the times in which we live and able to meet the aspirations and respond to the interests of the international community.

In conclusion, I would like to express the hope that this reform will not suffer the same fate as the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council. If those provisional rules of procedure were to be the measure of our hopes, we must ask ourselves whether it would be appropriate to wait another 60 years for reform.

**Mrs. Silkalna** (Latvia): May I begin by extending our deepest sympathies to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in connection with the horrific attacks on Amman two days ago.

My delegation welcomes this opportunity to revisit the question of Security Council reform. Over the past two months we have focused our efforts on those elements of the 2005 World Summit Outcome (*resolution 60/1*) for which our leaders have set a time frame for concrete results. However, our heads of State and Government have also requested a stocktaking of progress towards Security Council reform before the end of this year. If we are to register any progress at all, our collective courage and will to act on this matter in the upcoming weeks will be of crucial importance.

As a sponsor of the Group of Four (G-4) proposal (*A/59/L.64*) that was submitted at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, Latvia can reaffirm its support for the creation of both new permanent seats without right of veto, and non-permanent seats. We consider that the model of enlargement offered by the G-4 sufficiently meets the need for a more representative Security Council. It also widens the base of financial and other resources permanently available for the implementation and enforcement of Security Council decisions.

At the same time, we would encourage efforts by the Security Council to further adjust its working methods, in order to strengthen the relationship between the Security Council and the wider membership. Many delegations have already called for more transparency in the work of the Security Council, and we add our voice to that call. We also welcome the valuable contribution by Switzerland, Jordan, Singapore, Liechtenstein and Costa Rica in that direction. We see enlargement and working-method reform as complementary, equally important processes.

Security Council reform will clearly take time and patience, but substantial progress will never be made if we move at the current pace. Given that no consensus has been achieved in the past 12 years, how can we continue to delude ourselves and others that wide consensus will ever be possible on the question? We can debate for 12 more years and wait for miracles, or we can act decisively. We need not fear change if it is achieved with the tools of democracy. In a democratic organization such as the United Nations, a vote need not be divisive; it is a useful tool for reaching decisions and getting things done within a reasonable time span. The United Nations needs a modern, updated Security Council, the sooner the better.

**Mr. Sen** (India): First of all, let me begin by conveying our deepest condolences to Jordan on the tragic loss of life. It seems that the "heartache and the thousand natural shocks" have crossed all limits in our time. We shall certainly continue our stern and common struggle against terrorism.

I do not think that I will now rehash and repeat the old arguments and replay the old debates. I will begin by recalling a gentleman named Raymond Mikesell, who worked in the United States Treasury Department in the 1940s and who revealed in his memoir entitled *The Bretton Woods Debates* that he was asked — in fact instructed — to arrive at predetermined quotas by suitably adjusting statistics in order to ensure the overwhelming voting power and permanent presence of the big four: France, actually, was added later, after the antipathy to De Gaulle had been overcome. That was in fact also the process followed — he said in the book — in the creation of the United Nations which, together with the Bretton Woods institutions, was part of one plan. In fact, he notes that similarly the dominance and permanent presence of the big four in the United Nations was ensured. Incidentally, I would like to add that the quotas and the manner in which they were arrived at — were challenged by many delegations at that time, except of course for the delegation of Canada, which thought the mathematics was impeccable.

The point I am trying to make is that the political and economic order created in 1945 was a result of

those twin acts of gerrymandering. Therefore the concentration of political and economic power has to be transformed together to redress the balance in the interests of the developing countries.

Nobody wants to underestimate or to downplay the immense role that the victory of the big four played in the history of the world and for the world today. But at the same time it is very important to remember — or at least it would do no harm to sometimes remember — that soldiers from the colonies also contributed to that victory.

But for the post-Yalta and post-Potsdam world, Mahatama Gandhi's non-violent struggle against colonialism, involving hundreds of millions of people, played, I think, an equally important role, especially in terms of its impact, ranging from the anti-colonial and anti-apartheid struggles of Africa, through Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement in the United States, to Lech Walesa and the 10 million-strong Solidarity movement in Poland. And it is our contention that this struggle will not be completed until the defeated and the colonized of 1945 take their place as equal members in the decision-making councils of the United Nations, especially as permanent members of the Security Council.

The most powerful permanent member of the Security Council has talked of criteria. Another permanent member, in contradistinction to its own revolutionary tradition, has spoken of gradualism, the classical liberal doctrine. These remarks actually remind us of the old colonial argument — that you are not yet ready for independence, or that you should not enter this cricket club or that hospital because you do not belong to the ruling elite. Quite clearly, this is an argument that we cannot accept.

Similarly, the same most powerful permanent member has said that we should not revisit the old debates and has therefore opposed the reintroduction of the three proposals on reform introduced at the Assembly's fifty-ninth session. In fact it added, if I recall rightly, that we bit off more than we could chew. Unless one's reach exceeds one's grasp, how is one going to reform anything? Certainly we object to being either bitten or chewed. Ours is the old democratic objection to one country being chewed by another; it is based entirely on a regard for the discomfort of the country being so chewed.

Therefore, I am confident that the African Union will not be deterred — in terms of the decision taken at Addis Ababa and reiterated by South Africa yesterday — from introducing its draft resolution at the current session, as it has decided.

One of the leading lights of the Uniting for Consensus group claimed that the proposal of the African Union regarding the two "empowered seats", if I recall the words correctly, means that they could be filled either by two or by more Member States from among the African Union. In other words, Uniting for Consensus knows the African mind better than the Africans. Africa is being discovered afresh by the Uniting for Consensus group; the Ezulwini Consensus and the Addis Ababa decision mean exactly what that group says they mean. This is what Edward Said, a great Palestinian and one of the greatest figures of our time, called "orientalism". When practised by a representative of the Orient, it becomes a caricature of the original.

In the 1940s, the United States drafts for an international organization called the future United Nations Security Council "the executive committee", the implication being that the General Assembly was the legislature. If the executive committee usurps legislative and judicial powers, then we are on the road to dictatorship. As we all know, in the last decade-and-a-half, if not more, the Security Council has increasingly been exercising those functions. It has been delimiting boundaries, setting up tribunals, imposing reparations and making laws. It is worth remembering that in the Namibia case, one of the judges of the International Court of Justice said clearly that the Security Council was set up simply to keep the peace, not to change the world order, and not to do things which are better left to a peace treaty or a peace settlement.

It is quite clear to us that if the Charter can be flouted, no individual country can really do much about it because if it is under sanctions and it chooses to regard the sanctions as illegal, it would merely have more sanctions imposed on it. Therefore the remedy, according to some, is the International Court of Justice. And here I agree, in terms of the Aegean continental shelf case and the hostages in Iran case, that the Court, according to Article 41 of its Statute, does not recognize *litispendance*, that is, that it cannot take up matters which are before the Security Council. Also, as for the Namibia and Lockerbie cases, in peripheral

remarks, the Court is not bound not to carry out a judicial review, but the limitation quite clearly is that this can be done only in contentious proceedings or in the case of advisory opinions, which are only rarely sought. There is no other way of doing this.

What is more — and this is more important — the judgements of the Court cannot be enforced on the Security Council. There can be legal complications and contradictions, because there is no legal way of deciding, for instance, that if a certain Security Council decision violates *jus cogens* — as indeed was the case in the genocide case, according to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, in reference to Council resolution 713 (1991) — or if a sanctions regime violates *jus cogens*, then those who are actually implementing the regime could always claim the protection of Article 25 of the Charter. There is no way of resolving this. The only way left that has not been tried earlier is through an enlargement, particularly of the permanent membership, of the Security Council and the transformation of its working methods. That is the only recourse logically, technically and legally remaining.

However, leaving this aside for the moment in order to get to the working methods themselves, one of the delegations mentioned, I believe it was yesterday, that the Group of Four (G-4) has been obsessed purely with the question of enlargement. Even a cursory glance at the G-4 draft resolution would show that that is not the case. It is a comprehensive proposal with detailed paragraphs on working methods, particularly on the representation of countries through participation in subsidiary organs and the like, and the manner in which work should be conducted. So even if it is an obsession, I think it is, to be fair, a comprehensive obsession. One of the delegations said yesterday that if the working methods are considered together with enlargement, then that would take the working methods hostage. What we are seeing, and as I have just demonstrated, is that the working methods are and would be taken hostage by the Security Council unless they are accompanied by enlargement. It is true, as the delegation said, that in the past, perhaps enlargement was sometimes privileged. But then, as I have just shown, there was good reason for that.

The prime mover of the draft resolution on working methods says that the General Assembly would invite the Security Council to consider these working methods. It would really break our heart if the Security Council were to decline this invitation. And in fact the Council did decline it even before it was made. The most powerful member of the Security Council has clearly said that the Council will determine its own working methods and procedures. Similarly, the same prime mover goes on to say that it is for the Council to decide the actions that it would take, or, in this case, not to take any action at all, which I suppose is also a kind of action.

In any case, it is quite clear to us that the most unacceptable part is to say, as did the statement of the prime mover, that the working methods do not require a modification of the Charter. If there is no modification of the Charter, there will certainly be no new working methods. The history of the last half century more than amply proves this. In fact, another mover of the draft resolution quite clearly stated that the report of the Security Council had once again gone back to the old style of mere facts, which, ultimately, are meaningless without any analytical content. In other words, the new style simply proved to be a brief Indian summer, followed again by the long winter of the old style. So it is clear that working methods cannot be improved unless there is either an enlargement of the Council, through the addition of new permanent members committed to improving those methods and that would be held accountable in a review if they do not, or, at least, a Charter amendment on some of those working methods.

One country to the north of us was extremely eloquent on the non-use of the veto in the case of the responsibility to protect, an area in which that country has in the recent past played a leading role in organizing several workshops. But I faintly recall that, during negotiations in the group of 30 and the group of 15, when we had argued in favour of including the non-use of the veto in the outcome document, that country's flag certainly did not go up in our support.

We have to be very clear on the fact that, unless there is a determination to move uninterruptedly to a Charter amendment on issues such as the non-use of the veto, there is no practical way that these new working methods can actually be implemented in or by the Security Council.

Having said that — I am speaking for India now, not on behalf of the group of four — we would certainly support this draft resolution on working methods if it were to come up for action. We would

support it, and we would support it in spite of the constraints that I have mentioned. Those constraints are obvious. From what I have said, it follows that we would actually be substituting words for action. We would be giving an impression of reform when, in fact, no reform was taking place.

But in spite of that, I say that we would support these working methods, because at least it would be some kind of a declaration in words that we are moving in the right direction — so we would still support it if it were to come up for action.

The most powerful country that I mentioned earlier has also — at least in some capitals — circulated a non-paper, entitled, I believe, "Defeating the Swiss resolution". It reminds me, actually, of the non-paper they had circulated earlier, on "Defeating the G-4 resolution". In other words, let us defeat everything that is reasonable and public-spirited in order to ensure the continued victory of unreason and to use again the Uniting for Consensus argument that this would cause division and be inflammatory. Obviously, anything that precedes a reform is bound to be inflammatory. All radicalism is inflammatory.

The same paper goes on to say, "We reject this because it would mean the imposition of General Assembly oversight". I thought that was the whole idea — that the General Assembly should have some oversight.

I would not really refute the arguments regarding Article 30 and so on, because my young friend the Permanent Representative of Costa Rica has already done this with great ability and skill — to borrow Lincoln's phrase, far above my power to add or detract. I will therefore not go into this, but, still, I would say that a step is good only if it leads to further decisive steps in the very near future, because without this fundamental change in the balance of forces we cannot really effect reform of any kind.

In that same paper, and even in other statements, they have said that — an argument, incidentally, used earlier by the Uniting for Consensus group — that the Swiss paper and earlier such draft resolutions would all lead to a draining out of concentration and energy from the reform process. At any rate, if those are not the exact words, certainly this is their meaning.

I would suggest that we all recall the period after July, because when the discussions on the comprehensive reform of the Security Council ended, much of the colour, energy and synergy had gone out of the debate on the larger reform process and gone out of the negotiations. That is perfectly natural, because, after all, the Security Council reform added synergy to the general reform process for the simple reason that it is the heart of the reform — so it is perfectly natural.

The report of the Security Council that has been presented — I will not go into it because I have spoken at length already, and I do want to take up too much of the Assembly's time — but it merely confirms what we have been saying, quite apart from the point made by the movers of the Swiss resolution. It is reminiscent of Charles Dickens's Mr. Gradgrind — facts, facts, facts; and we all know where Mr. Gradgrind ended up. Facts really get one nowhere without some analytical content.

But apart from that, there are many other issues — consider the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), which we have had occasion to discuss. Although some progress has been made, the Charter is still not being followed in the case of the relationship between the Security Council and the troop-contributing countries. The thing is that, even here, if it is not arbitrary strength, then it is indecisive weakness. In any case, it does not fulfil the essential criterion for reasonable action, which is what the ancient Greeks called sophrosyne — the golden mean.

Therefore, if we look at this issue or at other working methods, as distinguished from actions that have been taken — for instance, some of the thematic debates — I think we will find that they take up too much of the time and energy of the Security Council, besides encroaching on the prerogatives of the General Assembly, because all that means is that the Security Council has less time to do something well, and more time to do ill what needs to be done well.

I think that we need to take a fresh look at this gamut of issues. I am not suggesting for a moment that there have been no successes — not at all. There have been successes, but at the same time it is important to remember that there have been failures that could have been mitigated, mistakes that could have been corrected, and successes that could have been made more secure had there been an enlargement of the Security Council with the entry of new members, particularly from Africa — the continent to which 70 per cent of the Council's time is devoted. Such new

members would have brought new essence, added optimality, and added acceptance to decisions and thereby minimized the use of force.

It would therefore be incorrect to think — and would not really be conducive to a reasonable future if one continued to feel — that all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds, because to say that the working methods of the Security Council are adequate would be tantamount to saying that the Spanish Inquisition was a time of objective judgment and transparency. I do not think that any of us could say that.

I believe, therefore, that we need to remember that there is a lot of room for improvement. We must also consider practical ways of adopting these new working methods and consider how the practical enlargement of the Security Council could take place, so that we can bring about a truly multilateral order in which justice reigns — not simply the capricious use of force. I am sure that one day that will happen. In the meantime, let us remember the Psalm in the Bible that states: "Ye weigh out the violence of your hands in the earth" (*The Holy Bible, Psalms 58:2*).

I have spoken at great length. I do not want to address all the arguments of the Uniting for Consensus group, which we have addressed in so many earlier debates. Briefly, to recapitulate, when one speaks of equity and equality, one should not forgot that this also applies within the permanent membership of the Security Council. And when one speaks of small countries, it is worth recalling that many small countries are, in fact, sponsors of the group of four's draft resolution. Nor should one forget that the arithmetic of the Uniting for Consensus proposal, in particular its emphasis on re-election and permanent presence applicable to all non-permanent seats, might in fact mean that there would be less chance of small countries being elected, whereas the G-4 proposal clearly increases those chances, even if not by a very large factor.

With that, I rest our case. I would only say in conclusion that I think it is a grave error for those who think that the issue of reform will go away to believe that the reform will be a bit like the Cheshire cat: that you will have a grin without a cat. They may well find that the cat has nine lives. In fact, in that sense, they may not only have caught the cat by the wrong tail but caught the wrong cat by the wrong tail.

It is now late. I would therefore conclude by saying that those who want to defend selfish privileges, prevent the empowerment of the developing countries and maintain the developing countries' role as the objects of history are, to our mind, forces already in dissolution. They have mistaken the hour of the day: it is evening.

**Mr. Loayza Barea** (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, on behalf of the Government and the people of Bolivia, to convey to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan our sincere condolences at the loss of human lives resulting from the unspeakable terrorist attacks that took place in Amman. We firmly denounce those attacks.

In its section on the Security Council, the 2005 World Summit Outcome (*resolution 60/1*) adopted by our heads of State or Government underlines that early reform of the Council is an essential element in making it more broadly representative, more efficient and more transparent.

In that context, commitment to achieving the goal of enhancing the Council's effectiveness and legitimacy in the implementation of its resolutions is particularly important. Such reform will respond to the expectations, which have existed since the reform process began, that the joint efforts of Member States can reap auspicious results.

My Government seeks to give the principal organs of the Organization the credibility and the effectiveness needed to tackle the vital issues on the international agenda. For the Security Council, which has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, to be representative, it must reflect the new twenty-first-century reality of the entire international community, in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

As we noted last February at an informal meeting of the General Assembly, I must reaffirm that Bolivia shares the aspiration for, and interest in, a broader concept of collective security that, in an effective and equitable manner, reflects and ensures the inclusion of all States Members of the Organization.

Thus, the option of broader participation in the Council would be a recognition of those principles and would ensure that the Council's decisions embody the constructive action that should characterize its work. In that context, the Council's working methods are

particularly germane, in particular the Council's relations with the General Assembly. Proposals put forward in that respect have contributed interesting points for our consideration.

That line of action should be applied not only to the principal organs of the United Nations but also to the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system. That would lead to greater coordination and more dynamic participation. Those entities should have the operational capacity to achieve concrete results that reflect, and give expression to, the political will of our States.

*The President took the Chair.*

That the issue of Security Council reform has been under consideration for more than a decade demonstrates the complexity of achieving that goal. Although the various consultations and meetings have not produced the anticipated results, they have contributed to agreement on the various proposals for the Council's new structure, reflecting the spirit of the mandate of our heads of State or Government.

For that reason, we continue to believe that representation on the Security Council must be broadened. That expansion should have the primary goal of ensuring balanced geographical representation, not merely because that goal responds to a general principle but because, we are increasingly convinced, regional initiatives are decisive in the settlement of special problems.

If the Security Council possesses the legitimacy that a comprehensive participatory process would confer on it, the United Nations system will gain the capacity to find solutions to the situations in various regions of the world that have not been satisfactorily resolved and responses to potential threats to international peace and security.

It is our belief that we must redouble our efforts to find a solution that reflects the aspirations of our Governments and our peoples. No effort to that end would be in vain. We trust that under your open, transparent and measured leadership, Mr. President, we will establish the most appropriate modalities for dealing with this important issue, as well as with establishment of the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission.

**Mr. Cordovez** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a particular pleasure, Sir, to address the General Assembly under your presidency.

I would like to convey the condolences and the feelings of solidarity of the Government and the people of Ecuador to the Government and the people of Jordan for the recent unspeakable attacks against them.

Despite the enormous changes that the international system has undergone in the past 60 years, the concept of collective security enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations has maintained its full force. But the effective application of that concept requires an efficient institutional mechanism. In order for it to be effective, the structure and the working methods of the Security Council must be modernized — they have to catch up with the world.

The reform of the Security Council is absolutely essential to ensure the Council's authority and credibility. The composition of the Council has not reflected the current reality for many years, and it should be enlarged as soon as possible. In doing so, we must take into account the principle of equitable geographic distribution. There must, of course, be more representation of developing countries in the Council.

The Council's working methods must be made democratic, as should its procedures and the way in which it takes its decisions. The transparency of its procedures and those of its subsidiary bodies should be increased.

The Council must give a more frequent account of its proceedings to countries not members. Here I would endorse what the delegate of India said, that consideration of a report of the kind we are now discussing should not be an annual event, but part of a much more frequent and interactive relationship between the Council and the General Assembly.

The Council must also maintain a better dialogue with countries that are not Council members. It should coordinate better with regional and subregional organizations for conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. This is particularly important in the Latin American and Caribbean region.

The countries that are involved in issues that are dealt with in informal Council consultations should be heard directly in those meetings. General and public summaries of what is discussed and decided in

informal consultations should be produced and made available immediately to States not members of the Council. Also, an overlapping of functions with the Council's subsidiary bodies should be avoided.

The Government of Ecuador feels that we should consider restricting the right of veto of the permanent members to very specific subjects, with a view to eventually eliminating the veto. A first step towards that goal would be to limit the exercise of the right of veto exclusively to the provisions of Chapter VII of the Charter.

Ecuador feels that 12 years of negotiations on these matters is too much time and has already cost the Organization an enormous amount of money as well as untold efforts on the part of all delegations. We need to find a way to make progress in this area. We feel that the proposal of Brazil, India, Germany and Japan has aspects of great interest that we support and that merit the soonest possible attention.

I would suggest that we decide how and when we are going to adopt the most necessary decisions, including the increase in members, in order to modernize the Council, and that we then subsequently move forward with the necessary political will.

**Mr. Butagira** (Uganda): To begin, I would like, on behalf of the Ugandan Government, to extend our heartfelt condolences to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on the tragic loss of innocent lives. This tragic incident underscores the fact that the international community should, more than ever before, resolve to fight the cancer of terrorism. In this regard, this General Assembly should move quickly to conclude the convention on counter-terrorism.

Uganda congratulates Ambassador Andrey Denisov of the Russian Federation, for presenting, on behalf of the Security Council, the report of the Council. We congratulate also the two co-Chairs of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and other Matters related to the Security Council.

Uganda aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the African Group.

The Security Council, as per its Charter mandate, is primarily responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. That is a very heavy responsibility exercised on behalf of Member States, which must have full confidence in the Council's operations and be assured that their interests are protected.

Very often, however, we have witnessed instances when, for unexplained reasons, the Security Council has adopted a hands-off policy. Africa, for instance, has witnessed a number of devastating conflicts. Yet, beyond condemnation and statements of appeal, the Security Council has not done enough.

The volatile security situation in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo is a case in point. This region has become a haven for all manner of rebel groups, who are a threat to the security of neighbouring States. The Council has watched as the numbers of these rebel groups have multiplied and they have acquired considerable quantities of arms. For example, a Ugandan rebel group known as the People's Redemption Army has grown to over 2,000 in number, under the eyes of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). Uganda warned of the existence of this group, but its warnings were ignored until recently, when the MONUC Representative, Ambassador Swing, acknowledged the presence of this and other rebel groups.

Surely, the Security Council cannot allow the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo to be a conservation area for rebels. His Excellency President Museveni of Uganda has suggested a way forward — that is, to give MONUC a robust mandate to disarm these negative elements or invite a third party to do the job. Alternatively, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other neighbours could act jointly under Security Council authorization to wipe out these terrorists, or the Council could authorize the African Union to do so.

The Security Council should weigh these options as a matter of urgency. The leader of the Council delegation to the Great Lakes region, Ambassador Jean-Marc de La Sablière of France, is quoted as saying in Uganda on 9 November, when the Council mission was in Uganda, that the time for voluntary disarmament has come to an end. So let the Council act quickly to disarm the rebels for the sake of peace and security in the region.

With regard to the question of equitable representation on the Security Council, much has been

said by many delegations, all emphasizing the importance of Council membership reflecting the realities of the modern world. Suffice it to say that Africa has been in the unenviable position of being treated as a second class citizen. It is the only continent without permanent membership. Much of the Council's work concerns Africa. By asking for two permanent seats with all the prerogatives, including the veto, we are not begging for favours. We are demanding a correction of a historic wrong. The present arrangement of five permanent members with a monopoly on the power of veto cannot be rationally justified, but as long as it lasts, we demand that Africa be accorded the same privilege. It is in this connection that the African Union reaffirmed last month its previous position calling for two permanent seats, with all the privileges that go with that status, as well as five non-permanent seats.

We do not buy the argument that it may be difficult to ask for permanent seats with the power of veto because the present five permanent members have no wish to enlarge their club. We are fighting for a principle that should not be sacrificed at the altar of expediency. History is replete with examples where steadfast struggle, however longlasting, has resulted in victory.

With regard to its working methods, the Security Council should not function as an exclusive club. Greater involvement by non-member States in its work is essential. For example, if a matter under discussion affects a Member State, that State should be afforded an opportunity to make a statement, rather than merely being invited to listen to the statements of Council members. In addition, the veto should be used as a last resort, if used at all, and certainly not in cases involving genocide, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

**Mr. Spatafora** (Italy): First of all, let me express, on behalf of the Government of Italy, the strongest possible condemnation of the criminal terrorist attacks against the civilian populations in Amman and Baghdad. Italy expresses its sincere solidarity to the Governments and the peoples of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and of Iraq and to the families of the innocent victims.

I would like to join my colleagues, Mr. President, in expressing my appreciation for the way in which you are leading the consultations on the various follow-ups to the outcome document (*resolution 60/1*). We feel your passion, the optimism of your heart and what I would call your "Mediterranean" enthusiasm, but at the same time we feel and appreciate your cool and calm presence. We are pleased to see that our President has a political vision, but that at the same time he is keen to avoid getting out of touch with the membership — that is, with the ground and its hard realities. Such a balance, I believe, is the Dag Hammarskjöld legacy at its best.

I would also like to join my colleagues in expressing strong support to and appreciation for the Vice-Chairs of the Open-ended Working Group, Ambassador Bethel and Ambassador Wenaweser, for their efforts and determination in leading, with energy and commitment and in a very delicate and sensitive environment, the discussions on the fundamental issue of improving the Security Council's working methods.

I would like to recall, in that regard, that we must implement the decision taken by the General Assembly at the 117th meeting of the fifty-ninth session. By approving paragraph 19 of the report of the Open-ended Working Group (*A/59/47*), we have committed ourselves to continue to work through the Group, considering both the expansion of the Security Council and the improvement of its working methods, "drawing on the experience of its fifty-ninth session as well as the views to be expressed during its sixtieth session". There is now a proposal on the table — a very lucid, interesting and articulate document circulated by the group of five small nations (S-5) — which, because of its fresh approach, deserves our very careful attention and our constructive, result-oriented and non-divisive engagement. By "non-divisive", I mean that we will have to be consensus-led, avoiding a vote.

I now turn to today's consultations on Security Council reform. As I am taking the floor at this stage of the debate, I feel that I should just say that I fully agree with and strongly support the approaches, considerations and reflections already put forward by many like-minded colleagues. To mention only one of these, I recall the statement by the Permanent Representative of Pakistan. Full of substance, creativity and flexibility, that statement was an invitation addressed to the entire membership to become engaged, under the President's leadership, in constructive, result-oriented, comprehensive and non-divisive consultations and negotiations.

Indeed, today's consultations should offer to the membership an opportunity for a moment of reflection so that, standing on solid ground, taking a fresh approach and building upon lessons learned, we can start a new phase of a fruitful brick-building exercise, as you said earlier, Mr. President. The positions taken on this matter by Uniting for Consensus are well known, and it is not necessary for me to expand on them. Ambassador Akram and many others among my colleagues have been very eloquent on the matter. I should just like to recall that the main feature and the strength of our position is its flexibility, which allows breathing room for a fresh approach, if and when needed: its inclusiveness and its capacity to accommodate the interests and concerns of ever-growing sectors of the membership.

As I recently recalled, the statements on Security Council reform made by our political leaders at the summit and at the ministerial segment of the General Assembly show, through the objectivity of the numbers, that a very clear relative majority — more than 42 per cent — of Member States now uphold positions, values and principles that are Uniting for Consensus positions, values and principles.

Uniting for Consensus is ready to engage, under the President's leadership, in brick-building consultations and negotiations with all sectors of the membership, in good faith and with strong good will and a constructive and result-oriented approach, aimed at comprehensive and non-divisive Security Council reform.

But let us bear in mind one of the most important lessons learned from the last session: we must not allow ourselves to become hostages to this issue, risking the derailment or mishandling of other issues that, in the follow-up to the summit, have more urgent priority. Such derailment or mishandling will occur if our approach to the Security Council issue is divisive instead of consensus-led. "Consensus" does not mean "unanimity"; rather, it means "quality consensus", a concept that I have borrowed from the President of the General Assembly and that has important political and geopolitical bearings. A quality consensus must be pursued with patience and determination, bearing in mind that the time has come for us — the entire membership — to try our best to address the issues at stake with a fresh approach, leaving behind the old divisive paths that have led us nowhere.

As stated in a very balanced way by Ambassador Wenaweser, Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein, at the 48th meeting,

> "Security Council reform cannot be at the top of our agenda for the time being. At the same time, of course, the agreement in the outcome document regarding early reform must not be ignored. It therefore seems advisable to gradually and cautiously build up the necessary political momentum that can result in effective change and real reform, with the strongest possible political support from the membership".

Ambassador Hannesson, Permanent Representative of Iceland, has expressed the view that the proposal of the Group of Four countries remains the most "practical" basis for reforming the Council. I do not believe that what we need is simply a "practical" way out. What is on the table?

We have heard strong requests for national permanent seats, strong requests for two regional — not national — permanent seats for Africa and requests for a permanent seat that would rotate among Arab States. Then we have the position of the 57 members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) — a sector representing nearly a third of this house — which is set out in the Final Communiqué of the Annual Coordination Meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the OIC, issued in New York on 23 September 2005 (*A/60/440*). In paragraph 64, the Communiqué states that the Meeting

> "stressed an increased role of regional groups in nomination of their representatives to serve on the Council. The Meeting called for a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects so as to make it more democratic, representative, transparent and accountable. It also recognized that there was a wide support for increasing the number of non-permanent members in the Security Council. It decided that any reform proposal which neglect the adequate representation of the Islamic Ummah in any category of membership in an extended Security Council will not be acceptable to the Islamic World."

Paragraph 68 states:

> "the Meeting stressed the initiation of constructive negotiation between all United

> Nations Member States, to refrain from pushing divisive votes, without imposing any time limits. It called for [and to build] upon the points of convergence such as the need to enlarge the Council, to increase the representation of developing countries, and to improve the working methods and transparency of the Council's work."

Is that the voice of a third of the membership calling for a "practical" solution, or is it a strong appeal by a third of the membership for a more advanced dialogue and for more flexible and inclusive "political" solutions? — a path, by the way, that is the same path for which Uniting for Consensus is striving.

We will trust your judgement and powers of analysis, Mr. President, when the time comes for you to assess where we stand on the path that must lead to the reform of the Security Council.

I would like to conclude by stressing a point that is of fundamental importance for all of us as far as Security Council reform is concerned, as it has a direct impact on our ownership of this House. In shaping the reform, we will have to be vigilant in order to preserve the "ownership rights" conferred on all of the Member States by the Charter on the basis of sovereign equality. We must prevent those rights from being gradually eroded. We will succeed if we do not compromise on one point: whichever Member State may have a seat in the Security Council, in whatever capacity, with or without a long renewable mandate, that Member State must be there only because we — the owners of the House — have decided to send it there with our votes. We may in future decide to keep that same Member State on the Council if, in our judgement, the time is not ripe for a rotation, on the basis of a scenario requiring our votes either in the General Assembly or, if necessary, in the regional group. A different scenario would imply — let us not fool ourselves — that we have given up our ownership.

Only if and when all Member States feel that they are not marginalized and that they will always be part of the process because they are owners of this House will we succeed in strengthening this Organization, because we will succeed in engaging all of its components. That is also the reason why we need non-divisive reform.

**The President**: I thank the Permanent Representative of Italy for his kind words with regard to how to combine Nordic and Mediterranean qualities as President of the General Assembly.

**Ms. Rivero** (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like first of all to express, on behalf of the Government and the people of Uruguay, our profound solidarity with the people of Jordan in connection with the heinous terrorist attacks that took place there.

As we have make clear on various occasions, Uruguay firmly believes in multilateralism. That is why, since the very creation of this Organization, we have contributed to the best of our ability to the many activities of the United Nations.

Uruguay has served in the Security Council for just one term. However, that was in 1965 and 1966 — many years ago. It was a very different time, and the work of the Council was very different from today.

That is why we welcome this opportunity to speak about the report of the Security Council. Thanks to the volume and comprehensiveness of the report, we can see that the work of that body has increased considerably in recent years, in terms of both its quantity and its scope. We would like to say that we appreciate the difficult work carried out by States members of the Council on a daily basis, as well as their efforts to make that work more accessible to other Member States.

Because we know that today's world is very different, we share the views of representatives who spoke earlier, that both the composition of the Council and its working methods must be adjusted to current political conditions, so as to make it a more effective instrument for dealing with current threats to international peace and security. Uruguay has expressed this view before: we want a more efficient, more democratic and more representative body.

With regard to expansion, we can support the model presented by the Group of Four countries, but we reiterate our firm opposition to the extension of the right of veto.

It is clear that today's urgent situations make a rapid response from the United Nations essential. But that does not imply that such response will be evaluated and decided upon without taking into account the considerations of Member States. We feel very optimistic in this regard, given the near-consensus among representatives concerning the need to devote a large part of the task of reforming the Security Council

to improving its working methods. In this respect, we view with particular interest the proposal introduced by the group of five small States — the "Small Five" — and we hope that it will provide a good basis for our future work in this field.

We consider it essential to increase the transparency of the Council's work as a way of increasing its credibility. We believe the practice of holding open debates in which all Member States can participate is quite suitable. However, there is room for improvement. It always surprises us when a draft resolution or declaration is produced immediately at the conclusion of such a debate. It seems to us that a certain amount of time should be set aside to allow Council members to consider the comments that have been made. They should not just listen to what is said but — more important — pay attention to it.

We are convinced that the enormous amount of time devoted to this subject will produce the desired results. We are confident that by bringing together all of the intelligent suggestions that have been made, we will be able to achieve, if not the perfect solution, at least the goal that we have set ourselves: to bring the Security Council's working methods up to date.

**Mr. Kittikhoun** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) (*spoke in French*): For 13 years now we have been engaged in this long and difficult debate on the reform of the Security Council — a subject that, as we are all keenly aware, is of overriding importance. Some — not without justification — have become frustrated and impatient, while others have counselled caution.

In this complex world in which threats to peace continue to loom, there can be no doubt that the Security Council has a significant role to play. To make that organ more effective, representative and democratic, it must be reformed so as to take account of current global realities.

The position of the Lao People's Democratic Republic on Security Council reform is well known and has been reaffirmed on many occasions. We favour an increase in the number of both permanent and non-permanent members, from developed and developing countries, in accordance with the principle of equitable geographic distribution and taking into account the relative importance of countries. We also believe that the reform should include measures that would make the working methods of the Council more transparent, particularly with regard to its decision-making process.

Africa is a large continent. The African people, like all other peoples, deserve our highest respect. The fact that Africa has no permanent seat on the Security Council in order to promote its rights is unjust. This injustice needs to be corrected, and Africa should, therefore, also have permanent seats in a future, enlarged Council.

Our world today is undergoing rapid and complex change. We are all encountering new, complex global realities. The Security Council, the principal body for the maintenance of international peace and security, must adapt to these realities. We must work together in a spirit of compromise to reform the Security Council in order to make it more effective, legitimate, democratic and transparent.

**Mr. Suazo** (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): My first words are directed to the Government and people of the Kingdom of Jordan to express our feelings of solidarity and condolences with regard to the terrorist attacks in the capital of Amman and upon the occasion of the loss of precious human life. Honduras repeats its condemnation and rejection of all acts of terrorism.

We would also like to express our thanks to the representative of the Russian Federation, Ambassador Denisov, for his presentation of the report on the activities of the Security Council. This document has been discussed at length by others who have taken the floor before me. This makes it difficult for me not to be repetitive or redundant in my intervention. However, I do consider it important to reiterate and state that we agree with many of the ideas that have been expressed. With regard to the fact that we need a thoroughgoing and systematic analysis of the activities carried out by the Security Council in the promotion of international peace and security. A mere list of the activities of the Security Council, documents circulated and thematic accounts give us only a limited view of what is being done. Very often, we do not know how and why certain decisions have been taken and particularly why in certain urgent situations there sometimes seems to be paralysis. The format of the document is repeated every year, but it gives us no more than a limited and incomplete view of all that is being done in the Security Council. This debate in the General Assembly is also part of this ritual, when we discuss this report. What has been said yesterday and today is the same

thing that my delegation has been hearing for the past ten years.

We are not moving forward, neither with enough speed nor in the right direction. The recent summit and the broad discussions of the future of the United Nations and its main bodies gave rise to hopes that this year's report would be more substantive and systematic. We hope that after the current considerations raised in this discussion, the Security Council will take into account all of the contributions and inputs made, so that next year we will see a report that reflects provisions of the Charter and the expectations of this Assembly with regard to that document.

Now I would like to refer to the reform of the Security Council and its enlargement. My delegation would like to stress the need for the body that has a direct bearing on political decisions regarding international peace and security and matters of life and death for thousands of human beings to be more democratic, more transparent and more representative and, therefore, more universally legitimate. Discussions on these matters are well known and will strengthen the Council and this is why we have always supported the need for the Council's reform. We feel that this will give greater and universal legitimacy to its actions and to its consultative and decision-making processes. In this respect, Honduras feels that Germany and Japan are two Members of this Organization that meet the requirements to be part of this body. Their contribution in humanitarian, social and economic fields puts them in the vanguard as candidates for seats on the Council.

Honduras, which is a founding Member of this Organization, considers that reform and the strengthening of the United Nations are closely linked to the integrity and legitimacy of its bodies. Therefore, we feel that the document adopted by the heads of State and Government at the last Summit gives us a clear and precise mandate to carry out the reform and exhaust all possible avenues for enlargement of the Security Council, the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council. These bodies should work jointly and in unison within a new international architecture.

My delegation will continue contributing and following up all initiatives and proposals aimed at strengthening our Organization. For that reason we are very happy to see the document prepared by the delegations of Costa Rica, Jordan, Liechtenstein, Singapore and Switzerland on the importance of defining the working methods and procedures of the Security Council, and particularly — its rules of procedure.

**Mr. Zinsou** (Benin) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to express from this rostrum my solemn condolences and those of my delegation to the delegation of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan upon the terrorist attacks that took place in that country 9 November 2005. We repeat here our condemnation of terrorism in all its forms. My delegation aligns itself with the statement made here yesterday by the Permanent Representative of Nigeria on behalf of the African Group.

Mr. President, my country, Benin, thanks you for organizing this debate. The annual report covers a period of intense activity by the Council, which has been faced with events and unfolding crisis situations. Africa has been the main arena of its interventions. The Council has striven to make the best possible use of the tools at its disposal under the Charter in order to control very diverse situations characterized by great instability in the fields of operation where missions are deployed on the continent. My delegation has contributed as much as possible to ensuring consensus within the Council on the ways to implement appropriate responses to the various problems that the changing situations in the field has placed before the Council in the exercise of its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

We welcome, in particular, the synergy that the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union has been able to develop with the United Nations to put the peace process in Côte d'Ivoire into the proper perspective. Adoption of resolutions 1572 (2004) and 1584 (2005) gave the Council the means to put pressure on the parties in Côte d'Ivoire to avoid any worsening of the situation that could lead to an escalation of the crisis.

However, although the coordinated actions of the United Nations and regional African organizations have been effective, the phenomenon of local ethnic violence has seriously affected the civilian population and has presented a major challenge. The massacre in Gatumba in Burundi on 13 August 2004, and the broad condemnation that ensued, was a catalyst in favour of

the emergence of a consensus on the principle of including in peacekeeping operations the mandate to ensure, by all means, the effective protection of civilians who are threatened by violence.

We must not neglect to mention here an essential aspect of the protection of civilians — that of children in armed conflict. That question was given special attention by the Council in the period covered by the report. My country welcomes the opportunity that it had to play a leading role in that area, in particular through the organization of a public debate on the issue and the holding of negotiations on resolution 1612 (2005) which was adopted by the Council on 26 July 2005.

That resolution authorizes the implementation of an oversight mechanism and the dissemination of information on children affected by armed conflicts, as well as the creation of a working group to study the report produced by that mechanism. We welcome the fact that the working group is being lead by the Ambassador of France, His Excellency Mr. Jean-Marc de La Sablière, who will chair the group.

Another major problem facing the Council has been the non-respect of the arms embargoes imposed by the Council. The problem is very serious in Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo where the flow of illegal arms continues to fuel endemic violence. It is necessary to ensure the political will of neighbouring countries and Member States in general in order to resolve that issue.

Among the progress that has been made with regard to the maintenance of peace in the period under consideration, specific reference should be made to the case of Sierra Leone, where the peacekeeping operation will soon be completely withdrawn and will be replaced by an integrated support office for peacebuilding. That office will have an important role to play in eliminating the underlying causes of the conflict. We could ask ourselves why it was not possible to address those issues during the period when the mission was fully operational. We hope that the mandates of peacekeeping operations in the future will take account of the underlying causes of conflict.

We welcome the fact that the question of land property rights in Burundi has been addressed in the framework of the international support mechanism designed to help that country after the restoration of constitutional order.

The Council is seen more often as a body responsible for managing crises and conflicts. But a closer reading of the Charter will bring to light some functions that a particular historical context has allowed us to ignore. Thus, the role of the Security Council in the area of conflict prevention has not been fully developed. Resolution 1625 (2005), which was negotiated by my delegation in close cooperation with other African countries that are Council members and which was adopted by the heads of State and Government on 14 September 2005, fills that gap to a certain extent.

Currently, the Secretary-General is looking at the modalities for its implementation. However, let us make no mistake here. These are not measures intended exclusively for Africa. They make up a framework of action that can be applied in any country throughout the world that is facing a situation that poses a risk for international peace and security.

We could not close without repeating, once again, our hope to see the reform of the Security Council soon attaining success and leading to an enlargement of its membership in a manner that respects the legitimate demands of the African continent.

Concerning the no less important issue of working methods, my delegation fully supports the principle of strengthened consultations with Member States and of enhanced transparency in the work of the Council. That transparency must allow for the discretion required when dealing with certain sensitive matters and must take account of the interests of Member States.

The Council will be dealing with the issue of its working methods shortly. However, that question should be examined in relationship with the new membership of an enlarged Council. The work methods of a Council with 25 or 26 members will differ considerably from those of a Council with 15 members. The question of work methods therefore can be dealt with in an integrated manner only when the issue of the membership of the Council has been fully defined. Nevertheless, all the improvements that can be introduced immediately should be introduced, taking into account the views of Member States.

The issue of thematic debates continues to be a sensitive issue. The thematic debates have a considerable usefulness for the work of the Council. They are necessary for the adoption of a proactive

approach in identifying and managing new threats and in the Council's exercise of its monitoring responsibilities. They also offer the possibility for broader consultation with Member States.

**The President**: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on the items of today and yesterday.

May I take it that the Assembly takes note of the report of the Security Council contained in document A/60/2?

*It was so decided.*

**The President**: A representative has asked to speak in right of reply. May I remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to 5 minutes for the second and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. Kitaoka** (Japan): Thank you, Sir for allowing us to exercise our right of reply, as the meeting comes to an end. My comments are related to the statement made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea this morning. I will keep my remarks brief and positive. First, we firmly believe that the qualifications of a given country for permanent membership in the Security Council should be judged based on that country's contributions to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Secondly, regarding the issues of the past, I wish to record that Prime Minister Koizumi has expressed on various occasions, including on 22 April of this year to more than 100 world leaders attending the Asia-Africa summit in Bandon, Indonesia, Japan's heartfelt apology for what Japan caused through its colonial rule and aggression, and stated its renewed resolve to contribute to the peace and prosperity of the world in the future. He again elaborated those thoughts on 15 August of this year. My delegation would like to remind the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the international community as a whole that the fifth meeting of the six-party talks was held in Beijing and bilateral talks between Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea were reconvened last week after one year's suspension. The representatives of our two countries had an in-depth exchange of views on various matters, including the settlement of unfortunate past issues, as well as outstanding issues of concern. They considered the talks to be very useful and agreed that it would be desirable to reconvene the bilateral talks in the near future.

**Mr. Ri Song Hyon** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The reform of the Security Council involves the interests of all Member States, big and small. For that reason, the discussion of Council reform is very complicated. Today, my delegation presented our views on that matter, including on the Council's working methods. In particular, we mentioned Japan's bid for a permanent seat and the issue of past crimes. That issue is really a yardstick to estimate whether or not Japan is truly committed to peace. My delegation is consistent in its position as regards Security Council reform, particularly the issue of permanent seats.

As for what the representative of Japan has just said about its commitment to peace, we cannot really know what Japan's real intentions are. We need actions — actions and deeds that match those words, because it is saying one thing and actually doing another. One particular example to which I referred is the fact that they are still worshipping at the altar of past crimes. I do not need to go into detail about that. We therefore view the issue of the reform of the Security Council with the utmost seriousness.

The representative of Japan also touched somewhat on bilateral issues, but since this is not the appropriate forum in which to deal with them, I will not go into further detail.

**The President**: We have come to the end of the debate on Security Council reform. I would like to thank delegations for the serious, calm, constructive and, in some cases, even erudite, spirit in which they conducted the debate on the report of the Security Council and the issue of Security Council reform.

I think that I can say that, as a result of the debate, we have a clearer view and perspective on the positions of Member States on Security Council work and Security Council reform. Members will understand that it is not possible to make a fair and full summary of that rich and comprehensive debate, so I will just limit myself to a few comments.

Regarding the report of the Security Council, a number of delegations noted improvements in the depth, thrust and content of the report. The report by the President of the Security Council, Ambassador Denisov, was welcomed and was well received. Some

delegations underlined the need for the report to continue in that direction and become even more analytical so as to truly serve its intended purpose as a means of communication with the General Assembly.

As members may recall, the representatives of several Member States advocated strengthened exchanges between the Council and the Assembly, for instance in the areas of peacekeeping and sanctions regimes.

With regard to the reform of the Security Council itself, I am sure that we all followed with great interest the positions put forward by delegations over the past two days. There seems to be general support for making the Council broadly representative and continuously effective, of course, and also for improving its working methods in order to enhance the legitimacy of its decisions. However, it is obvious that views are still divergent — in some cases, strongly divergent — as to the modalities for reforming the Council, especially regarding enlargement. That issue clearly relates to the fundamental interests of Member States.

The improvement of the Council's working methods has been a recurring theme and an important subject of our discussions, and I understand that that issue will continue to be discussed among Member States. Intentions and interests have also been expressed by various delegations with a view to taking other concrete steps at a later stage. Concerning the process for the further consideration of Council reform, a number of States called for the continuation of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Related Matters. I would like to thank the co-Chairpersons for the work that they carried out in that regard.

I think that we all now need to fully analyse the comments made during the debate and consider what has been stated in this body. In my work, I will be guided by the outcome document and by the debate, as well as by possible further proposals and initiatives from members, in order to fulfil the requirement set out in the outcome document, namely, to review progress by the end of the year. The serious debate today, and the tone in which it was conducted, represent an important contribution by the General Assembly in the context of that review of progress. I will continue to listen to Member States on this very important issue.

**The President**: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 9?

*It was so decided.*

**The President**: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 117.

**Agenda item 109**

**Notification by the Secretary-General under Article 12, paragraph 2, of the Charter of the United Nations**

**Note by the Secretary-General (A/60/352)**

**The President**: As members are aware, in accordance with the provisions of Article 12, paragraph 2 of the Charter of the United Nations, and with the consent of the Security Council, the Secretary-General is mandated to notify the General Assembly on matters relative to the maintenance of international peace and security that are being dealt with by the Security Council and on matters with which the Council has ceased to deal.

May I take it that the Assembly takes note of document A/60/352?

*It was so decided.*

**The President**: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 109.

*The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.*

United Nations A/60/PV.51

# General Assembly

Sixtieth session

*Official Records*

**51**st plenary meeting
Monday, 14 November 2005, 10 a.m.
New York

*President:* Mr. Eliasson ..... (Sweden)

*The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.*

**Agenda item 73**

**Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance**

**Report of the Secretary-General (A/60/223 and Corr.1)**

**Draft resolutions (A/60/L.18 and A/60/L.20)**

**(a) Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations**

**Reports of the Secretary-General (A/60/86, A/60/87, A/60/89, A/60/227, A/60/302 and A/60/432)**

**(c) Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequence of the Chernobyl disaster**

**Report of the Secretary-General (A/60/443)**

**Draft resolution (A/60/L.19)**

**(d) Assistance to the Palestinian people**

**Report of the Secretary-General (A/60/90)**

**The President**: It is a special honour for me to open today's plenary debate on the issue of strengthening the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations. Fourteen years ago, I was personally involved in the negotiations on and adoption of resolution 46/182, which created the main framework and several other main features of the United Nations coordination of international humanitarian assistance, so it is a very special experience to revert to these issues here in the Assembly today.

During the past year, the world has witnessed natural disasters of unprecedented scope and magnitude, from the devastating Indian Ocean tsunami in late December 2004 to the disastrous earthquake that struck South Asia in early October. As of today, as we know, the death toll in Pakistan is still rising, and thousands and thousands of people are in danger of freezing to death as winter sets in. A particularly intense and destructive hurricane season has left many thousands homeless as countries in the Caribbean as well as Central and North America continue to grapple with the effects of severe flooding and mudslides that those storms left behind.

Elsewhere, conflict-based man-made emergencies continue with varying intensity. Formerly warring parties in southern Sudan have signed a peace accord and entered a period of reconciliation. However, the

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conflict in the Darfur region of the Sudan has resulted in a severe humanitarian crisis. Food insecurity, fuelled by a lethal combination of conflict and drought, continues to affect close to 35 million people in sub-Saharan Africa, underlining the need for innovative and creative approaches to better predict and respond to acute malnutrition while tackling the underlying causes of hunger and poverty.

The complexity of today's crises and the growing magnitude of disasters require that humanitarian assistance remain one of the highest priorities of the work of the United Nations. The 2005 world summit offered us an opportunity to reflect on the current humanitarian system and to engage in serious, system-wide reforms. The events of the past year testify to the fact that reforms related to coordination and coherence are not only timely but urgent and, indeed, critical.

Specifically, the summit outcome document (*resolution 60/1*) reaffirms the importance of the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. It further reinforces the need for safe and unhindered access by humanitarian actors to populations in need. It calls upon us to strengthen the capacity to prepare for and respond to disasters and to improve the use of emergency standby capacities under United Nations auspices for rapid response to humanitarian emergencies. Finally, it calls for better predictability of humanitarian funding, notably by improving the current Central Emergency Revolving Fund.

For more than a decade, the Fund has played an important role in providing United Nations agencies with readily available resources to allow them to respond quickly to humanitarian emergencies. However, owing to its limited size and revolving nature, the Fund has faced difficulties in fulfilling its aim of ensuring the provision of adequate resources for use in the initial phase of emergencies. The proposed improved Central Emergency Revolving Fund, which will include a grant element, aims to promote early response in sudden-onset crises as well as to strengthen the core elements of humanitarian response in underfunded crises.

Today's debate is based on several reports from the Secretary-General, including one on sub-item (c), concerning the Chernobyl disaster (*A/60/443*). As next year will mark the twentieth anniversary of that disaster, we are reminded that both national and international efforts are still required to study, mitigate and minimize its long-term consequences.

There is also a report of the Secretary-General on sub-item (d), on assistance to the Palestinian people (*A/60/90*). Humanitarian assistance from the United Nations remains an urgent necessity for the Palestinian people.

Three draft resolutions have been submitted for action today: the first on the South Asian earthquake disaster (*A/60/L.18*), the second on the Chernobyl disaster (*A/60/L.19*) and the third on the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster (*A/60/L.20*).

I look forward to constructive, creative and compassionate deliberations during today's debate. Behind the issues under discussion today are hundreds of thousands of human beings in grave need and, in far too many cases, in mortal danger. Our solidarity with them must be unwavering.

I call now on the representative of Pakistan to introduce draft resolution A/60/L.18.

**Mr. Akram** (Pakistan): In recent months, the world has seen a succession of devastating natural disasters, the frequency and intensity of which are unprecedented in living memory. The last 12 months have been particularly devastating in terms of the human and material loss caused by scores of such disasters. The report of the Secretary-General on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (*A/60/87*) states that, in 2004 alone there were 360 disasters affecting more than 145 million persons and causing more than $103 billion in material damage.

The massive earthquake that took place off the coast of Sumatra in December 2004 and the resulting tsunami brought untold misery to more than 12 nations and killed more than 240,000 people. The hurricanes that struck the Caribbean in the fall of 2004 and that revisited in 2005 in the form of Hurricanes Katrina and Wilma were the strongest in a decade. Despite credible early warnings, a swarm of desert locusts attacked more than 10 countries in West and North Africa, destroying millions of hectares of crops. The spectre of avian flu threatens parts of Asia and Europe and the disease could become a global pandemic.

Five weeks ago, an earthquake registering 7.6 on the Richter scale hit South Asia, causing colossal loss of life and material damage, especially in the North-

West Frontier province of Pakistan, in Jammu and Kashmir, in India and in Afghanistan. It was the worst-ever disaster in the region's history. In Pakistan and Azad Kashmir, 73,000 people died, and more than 74,000 were injured. Millions have been displaced and or are shelterless, even as the cruel Himalayan winter descends over the region. The Secretary-General has described the response to the South Asian earthquake as the most challenging relief operation ever faced by the United Nations.

On 7 November, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Jan Egeland, said that the response to the earthquake represented a test like no other for a Member State and the international community. He observed that over the previous 10 days, extraordinary progress had been made faced with extraordinary challenges. He also paid tribute to Pakistan, its Government, its military and its people. He further noted that the assistance efforts were still not reaching all those below the snow line and that an estimated 200,000 people remained above the snow line. Meanwhile, the World Meteorological Organization had warned that the winter might be unusually harsh.

The United Nations has identified a number of immediate priorities to meet that disaster, including the provision of helicopters, heating, winterized tents, assistance for surgery, vaccinations, mobile health-care teams, blankets, generators, water and sanitation, tarpaulins, stoves and trauma recovery.

On behalf of the Government and the people of Pakistan, I wish to thank the international community for its support and solidarity with Pakistan at this tragic time. I express my profound appreciation to the peoples and the Governments of all Member States represented here, all United Nations agencies, relevant international organizations, civil society and the hundreds of non-governmental organizations for their tremendous outpouring of sympathy and support.

We also wish to thank Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his personal engagement in launching in Geneva the United Nations South Asia earthquake 2005 flash appeal for $550 million and welcome his forthcoming visit to Pakistan for the international donors conference to be held in Islamabad on 19 November 2005.

We would like to commend the excellent role played by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Jan Egeland, and his entire team in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, as well as the admirable contributions of other United Nations entities and national, regional and international organizations for their prompt and active engagement in the field of relief and rescue operations, which have saved hundreds of thousands of precious lives.

In addressing the recovery and reconstruction efforts, the sustained attention and contribution of the international community is vital. In that context, it is essential that international attention remain focused on the long-term impact of the disaster and on the need to reconstruct the infrastructure that can enable the millions of affected people to survive through the winter, rebuild their homes, schools, hospitals, livelihoods and rebuild their broken lives.

Pakistan hopes that the international community will support the medium- and long-term rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts of the Government and people of Pakistan. This will be a long and arduous task, spanning months and years. In that regard we welcome the generous pledges made by a number of Member States to the long-term reconstruction projects in the affected areas and look forward to the concrete expression of support at the reconstruction conference in Islamabad on 19 November.

To affirm the solidarity of the international community with all the victims of the earthquake disaster in South Asia, Pakistan has initiated the draft resolution, contained in document A/60/L.18. This draft is sponsored by 113 Member States, to all of whom the Pakistan delegation is most grateful. The purposes of the draft resolution, which I now have the honour to introduce on behalf of the sponsors, are self-explanatory.

The extensive list of sponsors is a demonstration of our solidarity as we stand together against the tragedies caused by such natural disasters and of our shared commitment to withstand their impact by a united force of the peoples of the United Nations.

May I take this opportunity to announce that in addition to the countries reflected in the document, the following additional Member States have joined as sponsors of the draft resolution: Armenia, Austria, Australia, Belgium, Brunei Darussalam, El Salvador, Haiti, Hungary, Grenada, Iceland, Ireland, Kyrgyzstan,

Micronesia, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Timor-Leste, Ukraine and the United States of America. It is our hope that the draft resolution will be adopted unanimously by the General Assembly.

Disasters like the South Asian earthquake teach us some hard lessons, the primary one being that though we cannot prevent natural disasters, we can certainly work together to mitigate their devastating impact. We need a comprehensive strategy to achieve such disaster management — including early warning systems and disaster preparedness plans.

Secondly, the role of the United Nations and its disaster coordination machinery — the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) — as well as the role of the specialized agencies of the United Nations, with their specific expertise, is indispensable. This machinery needs to be strengthened to respond to such natural or human calamities. Even if support in such disasters is provided largely through bilateral channels, the United Nations overall coordination role is crucial, especially in the early stages of such catastrophes.

Thirdly, and most important, it is imperative that the United Nations be provided with adequate financial resources to respond quickly and effectively to such disasters. Pakistan fully endorses the Secretary-General's proposal for a $500 million Central Emergency Revolving Fund to be placed at his disposal for that purpose.

On other issues related to the agenda item, the Pakistan delegation associates itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Jamaica.

**The President**: I now give the floor to Mr. Vladimir Tsalko, Chairman of the State Committee on the issues of Chernobyl disaster consequences of the Republic of Belarus, to introduce draft resolution A/60/L.19.

**Mr. Tsalko** (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of the sponsors I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution entitled, "Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster", contained in document A/60/L.19. I am pleased to announce that since the draft was published, the following States have joined as additional sponsors: Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Haiti, Hungary, India, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Monaco, Myanmar, Norway, Peru, the Republic of Korea, Slovakia, Slovenia, Thailand and Viet Nam.

Compared to similar previous General Assembly texts, more than half of the provisions of this draft are new, thereby reflecting the dynamism of international cooperation on Chernobyl and the great number of events that have occurred in the area over the last two years. It also reflects the essential element: the beginning of a new stage in the development of international post-Chernobyl interaction. The main element of this stage is not the delivery of emergency humanitarian assistance but the comprehensive rehabilitation of the contaminated areas, including the renewal of socio-economic activity in those regions with a view to creating safe living conditions for people in the area.

Recently, we discussed that new United Nations strategy at the international conference in Vienna in September, within the context of the Chernobyl Forum. The draft resolution reflects our agreements, many of the provisions of which are directed towards the implementation of the recommendations of the main report of the Forum on the legacy of Chernobyl. I would like to note first the importance of the specialized medical, ecological, social and economic research into the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster.

The draft resolution aims to strengthen the United Nations coordination mechanism to organize international post-Chernobyl interaction, as well as to enhance the role of the United Nations Coordinator on Chernobyl in that mechanism. We are convinced that the United Nations Development Programme Administrator, Mr. Kemal Dervis, who was recently appointed to his post, will successfully implement the agreed approaches in this important matter.

The draft resolution also expresses support for the initiatives of the three affected countries — the Republic of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine — and is timed to coincide with the twentieth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster. One of those initiatives is to convene a special meeting of the General Assembly in April 2006 to mark the twentieth anniversary of the disaster, not simply to speak again about our post-Chernobyl problems, but mostly for the

purpose of discussing and coordinating our further joint steps to improve the living conditions of millions of people in the contaminated territories, in particular the living conditions of children.

We would like to thank all States that have contributed so much to the improvement of the draft. It is now ready for consideration, and we hope it will be adopted by consensus, as was the case in previous years.

Now, in my national capacity, I would like to touch upon some issues that the General Assembly is considering today. For Belarus, whose territory received some 70 per cent of the radioactive fall-out as a result of the Chernobyl disaster, the problem of Chernobyl is the most topical. Even now, almost 20 years after the disaster, the entire range of post-Chernobyl problems continues to be a heavy burden on the shoulders of the people of Belarus. The area contaminated with long-lived radioactive nuclides constitutes 21 per cent of the country's entire territory. The population in that area continues to be subject to chronic internal and external irradiation because of the long-lived radioactive nuclides present in the environment.

The economy of those regions, especially as related to agriculture and forestry, is in a dire situation. Safe production technologies are needed. Our experts have been working for a long time in that area and have managed to develop a number of technologies, making it possible to produce products which meet non-contamination standards. We are ready to share that invaluable experience with other States.

The Republic of Belarus has already spent more than $17 billion on efforts to resolve the range of its post-Chernobyl problems, including the resettlement of 137,000 people. In order to comply with the next State programme for 2006-2010, we plan to allocate about $2 billion. However, State funding cannot fully cover the economic damage inflicted by the Chernobyl disaster, estimated by experts to be $235 billion.

The accident in Chernobyl is a disaster, the magnitude of whose consequences go far beyond the economic capacities of one State or even of a group of States. Therefore, it is very important to establish constructive long-term international cooperation with the United Nations carrying out liaison and coordination. It is important to be guided by the priority needs of the affected States; otherwise, international interaction will lose its efficiency, and the financial resources will be spent without producing the desired effect.

We are grateful to the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund for giving the post-Chernobyl problems of Belarus due attention in the 2005 draft country programme documents for the next five years. We view this as a guarantee that the new United Nations strategy on Chernobyl will be successfully implemented in our country. The State and Government agencies of Belarus are prepared to engage in active cooperation with the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system on Chernobyl issues. We call upon donor countries to give the necessary financial support for the implementation of these country programme documents.

To implement the new United Nations strategy, an international conference entitled "Twenty Years after Chernobyl: Strategy for the Recovery and Sustainable Development of the Affected Areas" is scheduled to be held in Minsk on 19 to 21 April 2006. We invite all interested States and international organizations to take an active part in the lead-up to and the conduct of this important forum. The aim of it is to work out and agree on joint, coordinated actions by Governments of the affected countries and the international community for comprehensive rehabilitation of the affected areas in the territory for the next 10 years.

To put it plainly, we are talking about the economic survival of these regions. However, when considering the Chernobyl topic from the standpoint of economic recovery and sustainable development, we should not forget the long-term medical and environmental aftermath of the disaster. We are grateful to donor countries and to international organizations that have provided assistance in studying and overcoming the aftermath of the disaster. This particularly pertains to diagnosing and the early detection of oncological and cardiovascular diseases, in particular those that affect children. I would like to say that, at this stage, we have sufficient resources and capacity for treating children and adolescents within our country. We still need modern medical equipment, though, and we ask our donors to give priority attention to this area.

Like all peoples, we in Belarus are extremely concerned at the growing frequency of large-scale natural disasters that have been occurring in recent times in various parts of the world. Countries with which Belarus has had longstanding, close and friendly relations have suffered. The Chernobyl problem has heightened our awareness of the complexity of the situation in which our friends find themselves. Therefore, Belarus has co-sponsored draft resolutions on dealing with the consequences of the Indian Ocean tsunami and the earthquake in Pakistan.

These natural disasters prompt two main conclusions with regard to the future. First, decisive action needs to be taken at all levels to implement the Hyogo Declaration and the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015, which were adopted at the 2005 World Conference on Disaster Reduction. Particular attention should be given to establishing an international early warning and threat reduction system for natural disasters and for reducing the danger they pose.

Secondly, the financial capacity of the United Nations to react to emergency humanitarian situations urgently needs to be increased. We welcome here the efforts of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Jan Egeland, in particular his efforts to strengthen the Central Emergency Response Fund of the United Nations. The implementation of that initiative would make it possible for the United Nations quickly and adequately to provide assistance to countries that are going through humanitarian crises. It would also make it possible to increase financing for recovery measures to deal with the long-term consequences of large-scale natural disasters and technological catastrophes that have occurred over the last decade.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia, who will introduce draft resolution A/60/L.20 on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

**Mr. Hamidon** (Malaysia): I shall be speaking first on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) under agenda item 73, sub-item (a); and then I will present a statement in my national capacity on sub-item (d).

I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/60/L.20, entitled "Strengthening emergency relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and prevention in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster" on behalf of the ASEAN member countries — namely Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam, and my own country, Malaysia, and the other sponsors who are listed in the draft itself.

Let me first begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his reports prepared under agenda item 73 on the strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance, and the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations.

It has been proven time and again how vulnerable we all are to the violent and destructive forces of nature. Natural disasters and calamities have often hit us without prior warning. For most of the countries in the developing world, which lack sophisticated high-tech early warning equipment, natural disasters have inflicted untold misery, devastation of property and loss of human lives. As we have witnessed on many occasions, the impact of the destruction has placed a heavy burden on the social and economic fabric of the affected countries, particularly on the developing and least developed countries.

Many of us, in varying degrees, have experienced the struggle to rebuild and recover from the devastation in the aftermath of natural disasters. The struggle to cope and rebuild from the pieces of destruction would have been more painful and daunting, if not for the support and assistance that came in from around the world in the name of humanity. Facing the pain and suffering caused by natural disasters, the affected countries could only seek solace in the overwhelming expression of international cooperation, assistance, solidarity and sympathy. We recall with a deep sense of appreciation such demonstrations of humanity by Governments, rich and poor, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and individuals all around the world to offer a helping hand in the wake of the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami of 26 December 2004.

With a globalized media network, the response to that tragedy was quick and unprecedented, enabling international organizations, including the United Nations and other entities, to organize emergency assistance to reach the affected countries in due time. Once again, we would like to take this opportunity to

acknowledge our appreciation to the international community and the United Nations system for their support and assistance in saving thousands of lives and assisting millions of tsunami victims to rebuild their future. It is our responsibility to ensure the sustainability of international attention and the continuing support to the reconstruction efforts in the tsunami-affected countries, even though the issue no longer enjoys broad international media coverage.

Be that as it may, the Governments of affected countries on the Indian Ocean rim have continued working to fulfil their obligations regarding reconstruction and restoring normal life for their people. At the same time, efforts have been made to ensure that the necessary preventive measures are put in place to protect their people from such destructive forces in the future.

In this context, we have agreed to take the necessary measures, with the involvement of the international community, the United Nations system, international organizations, international financial institutions and civil society, as well as the private sector, as set out in General Assembly resolution 59/279 of 19 January 2005 on strengthening emergency relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and prevention in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster.

In the implementation of the resolution, we are pleased to report that shelter programmes have been prepared and implemented, and that there were no major outbreaks of pandemic diseases in the affected areas. Nonetheless, we continue to be mindful of the remaining challenges in ensuring the full implementation of medium- and long-term rehabilitation and community-driven reconstruction.

We have to acknowledge that the task and the responsibility of the affected Governments to undertake the efforts of reconstruction and redevelopment of the areas and provinces devastated by the tsunami are far from easy. Nonetheless, the affected Governments are committed to ensuring that the reconstruction and redevelopment efforts are aimed at providing the people with a better future and safer environment, in line with the high expectations of their people and the donor community.

We have to be mindful that this is not only a challenge to the tsunami-affected countries, but also for the international community in ensuring a continued, effective management and coordination in the transition between humanitarian assistance and development.

There is a need to look at the broader agenda with the formulation of longer-term goals to assist the tsunami-affected populations. That would involve effective coordination among the Governments of affected countries, relevant bodies of the United Nations system, donor countries, regional and international financial institutions, civil society and the private sector in ensuring equity of assistance among the affected communities.

It is our expectation that both the tsunami-affected countries and the donor communities must remain committed to promoting transparency and accountability with respect to the channelling and utilization of resources, which will facilitate the long-term sustainability of the recovery and reconstruction efforts. Furthermore, the capacity of the United Nations and the international community to respond and to deal with emergency humanitarian situations in countries affected by natural disasters should be enhanced in order to address the problems promptly with greater capacity, quality and accountability.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has undertaken several steps to strengthen regional and national capacity. In that connection, ASEAN is pleased to inform that it has concluded the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response in July 2005. It is an agreement that facilitates response and disaster reduction activities in the region. In the same way, we also welcome the establishment of a Multi-Donor Voluntary Trust Fund on Tsunami Early Warning Arrangements in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia, which will contribute to the setting-up of a network of early warning systems and to the building up of capacity of the region in dealing with natural disasters.

An ASEAN-United Nations seminar on humanitarian assistance and rapid response capacity was also held last October to identify concrete steps to enhance ASEAN's response capacity.

Against that background, I am pleased to introduce draft resolution A/60/L.20. We would like to thank delegations that have been cooperating with ASEAN and all those delegations that, by co-sponsoring the resolution, join ASEAN and the affected countries in voicing their concerns and interest with regard to this issue.

The draft resolution essentially proposes to update General Assembly resolution 59/279 of 19 January 2005, incorporating additional paragraphs from the Joint Asian-African Leaders' Statement on Tsunami, Earthquake and Other Natural Disasters, which was adopted at the Asian-African Summit of 2005, and from the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening emergency relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction, recovery and prevention in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster (*A/60/86*), as well as from the World Conference on Disaster Reduction and other initiatives.

The updated resolution focuses on seven main aspects: first, the reaffirmation of the commitment of the heads of State and Government as reflected in the 2005 World Summit Outcome to work expeditiously towards the establishment of a worldwide early warning system for all natural hazards by building on existing national and regional capacities, such as the newly established Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System; secondly, the continued support and generous contributions of the international community, particularly towards further rehabilitation and reconstruction; thirdly, the appointment of President Bill Clinton as the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery and the expression of appreciation for the efforts undertaken by the Special Envoy; fourthly, the establishment of the Global Consortium for Tsunami-Affected Countries to sustain the political will of the international community to support medium- and long-term rehabilitation, reconstruction and risk reduction efforts led by the Governments of the tsunami-affected countries; fifthly, the importance of transparency and accountability from the perspectives of donor and recipient countries; sixthly, requesting the Secretary-General to continue to explore ways to strengthen the rapid response capacities of the international community to provide immediate humanitarian relief, building on existing arrangements and ongoing initiatives; and finally, the importance of developing stronger institutions, mechanisms and capacities at all levels by promoting public education, awareness and community participation.

On behalf of the sponsors, I wish to inform you that a correction is needed in draft resolution L.20 before you. In the eleventh preambular paragraph, the phrase "a multinodal early warning system network" should be deleted and replaced with "an early warning system".

The eleventh preambular paragraph should then read:

> "*Welcoming also* the establishment of the Multi-Donor Voluntary Trust Fund on Tsunami Early Warning Arrangements in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia, which will contribute to setting up an early warning system and to building up the capacity of the region in dealing with natural disasters,"

In conclusion, I wish to express that ASEAN looks forward to the continuing support of the Member States of the United Nations for this important resolution and to the adoption of the resolution by consensus.

I now turn to the next part of my intervention, which is a national statement on sub-item (d) of the agenda item, entitled "Assistance to the Palestinian people".

My delegation would like to express at the outset its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report submitted under agenda item 73(d), entitled "Assistance to the Palestinian people", in document A/60/90.

It is clear to us from the report that the humanitarian situation and the daily living and socio-economic conditions in the occupied Palestinian territories have not improved since the last report. The report, especially paragraphs 8 through 13, contains revealing and disturbing accounts and figures concerning the deteriorating situation. The international community should be concerned with the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, since it has been well documented in the reports by other United Nations agencies, in particular the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Given the prevailing circumstances, the role played and efforts made by the relevant United Nations agencies, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian

Authority, and the World Bank, as well as other humanitarian organizations, in extending the necessary humanitarian and emergency assistance in the occupied Palestinian territories remain crucial and indispensable.

However, my delegation regrets that such assistance has been and continues to be provided under difficult circumstances, owing primarily to the repressive and restrictive measures imposed by Israel. My delegation concurs with the observation made in paragraph 58 of the report that those restrictions clearly violate established principles of international law and have resulted in increased costs for operational agencies, which are ultimately borne by the international community.

Unless significantly eased, such policies and measures will continue to pose serious obstructions to economic recovery and development opportunities for the majority of Palestinians. We wish to reiterate our call to Israel to allow unfettered access to staff members of United Nations agencies and humanitarian workers in the occupied territories, so that they can carry out their work effectively. As a matter of priority, Israel must ease restrictions and work closely with United Nations agencies, donor countries and humanitarian organizations to ensure that aid and development projects are delivered in a timely and comprehensive manner.

My delegation also wishes to reiterate its call to Israel to comply with the Advisory Opinion concerning the separation wall, rendered by the International Court of Justice in July 2004, and with General Assembly resolution ES-10/15. As highlighted in paragraphs 13 and 73 of the report (*A/60/90*), the separation wall and its associated regime has had, and will continue to have, an adverse impact on the humanitarian situation and the living and socio-economic conditions of the Palestinian communities affected by its construction and completion. The separation wall and its associated regime also pose, and will continue to pose, problems, in terms of movement and access, for staff members of United Nations agencies and humanitarian workers in carrying out their work in the occupied Palestinian territory.

My delegation commends the performance of all United Nations agencies for their efforts and for carrying out programmes to provide a variety of types of economic, humanitarian and social assistance to the Palestinian people and public institutions, as reflected, in considerable detail, in paragraphs 14 through 53 of the report. The remaining challenges, as well as the unmet and emerging requirements, as documented in paragraphs 67 through 74 of the report, require particular attention. We believe that all those efforts and programmes that have been identified by United Nations agencies could, if successfully implemented, create an environment that could contribute to the achievement of sustainable peace in the region. All of those efforts and programmes require financial and other resources. We urge the international donor community to continue to contribute generously to that cause. For our part, the Government and the people of Malaysia will continue to extend assistance, within our limited means and capacity, to the people of Palestine.

My delegation is pleased to note that, as called for by many delegations in the past, the relevant United Nations agencies and parties have established, and will continue to undertake, measures to harmonize and coordinate their humanitarian and emergency assistance efforts and programmes, under the coordination of the Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority and with the participation of the Palestinian Authority.

My delegation welcomes the launch of a new media-related inter-agency coordination mechanism aimed at drawing attention to and providing information about the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and the United Nations presence in the region.

We need to understand that financial resources and other technical assistance made available to the Palestinians will not, by themselves, resolve the political crisis affecting the lives of the Palestinians. The solution remains to urge Israel to end the occupation and respect international law and relevant United Nations resolutions. We must achieve a peaceful resolution to the conflict based on a comprehensive political dialogue and follow-up to the parties' respective commitments and obligations under the road map. My delegation considers the Israeli disengagement from Gaza to be a positive move that could contribute to peace and stability and to economic improvement in the area.

In this connection, it is vital for both Israel and Palestine to establish and maintain close coordination within the context of the road map. Peace will remain elusive unless all parties concerned — those in the region and the wider international community — are prepared to play their part responsibly, in good faith and with a high degree of political will to seek a long-lasting peace.

**Mr. Neil** (Jamaica): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 73, "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance", and sub-tem (a), "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations".

The past decade has seen a growing demand for United Nations humanitarian assistance. The increased frequency and severity of natural disasters affecting nearly all parts of the globe during the past year, in particular, has demonstrated our continued vulnerability to the vicissitudes of nature. As you, Mr. President, mentioned in your opening statement, we have witnessed the devastation caused by the tsunami in south Asia in late December 2004, a disastrous earthquake that struck south Asia this past October, with widespread destruction and loss of life affecting Pakistan, and the intensive and destructive 2005 hurricane season, which wreaked havoc in the Caribbean, Central America and the south coast regions of the United States.

Such situations are additional to long-standing complex emergency situations, while new ones are rising as a result of armed conflicts, many of them in developing countries. The frequency, changing nature and scope of such emergencies call for an increased response from the international community in terms of more resources and the provision of the requisite skills in disaster prevention and management.

Against that background, serious challenges have been posed for the United Nations humanitarian response mechanism. The need to strengthen its coordination and disaster-relief capacity, including special economic assistance, so as to ensure that all cases of emergency are given due attention and that relief supplies are based on the principles of neutrality, humanity and impartiality, is therefore of paramount importance.

Addressing the funding capacity of the United Nations system is one of the most critical steps in achieving the objective of improving the United Nations emergency-response capacity. The reliability and predictability of funding is essential, if we are to ensure that not only new and large-scale emergencies that capture the attention of the media, but also other humanitarian crises that are not given much publicity, receive attention. This all results in increasing demands on the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF), which requires urgent review if it is to fulfil its purposes.

In this regard, we believe that one of the most significant decisions taken by our leaders at the High-level Plenary Meeting this year was their endorsement of the Economic and Social Council recommendations made in July this year to the General Assembly to improve the Fund.

The report of the Secretary-General on the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, contained in document A/60/432, makes some useful recommendations for improving the operations of the Fund. The Group of 77 and China supports the expansion of the Fund from its current base of $50 million to $500 million, and the inclusion of a grant component to support rapid response. This will, we believe, significantly contribute to achieving a more predictable, timely response to humanitarian emergencies.

We appreciate the contributions from the donor community, and we especially commend the members of the European Union, in particular the United Kingdom, which has made pledges towards the expansion of the Fund that we anticipate will materialize in 2006. Non-traditional donors, such as the private sector and the developing countries, are also to be encouraged, and we are particularly pleased at the steps taken by some developing countries in making pledges.

We look forward to further discussions on how best to continue to improve existing financial mechanisms, such as the flash appeals process, as well as a possible review of the allocation of resources from the regular budget to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) for more long-term humanitarian response, bearing in mind the projected needs.

Effective coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance requires cooperation between all stakeholders, including the United Nations system, and regional as well as national mechanisms. While acknowledging the coordinating leadership role of the United Nations, account should be taken of the role to be played by national Governments in identifying national priorities. The need for field-level coordination is of paramount importance. We welcome the announcement in July by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs of a programme for the training and capacity-building of resident and humanitarian coordinators, as well as to increase the pool of experienced candidates for the coordinator system, so as to allow them to draw upon a reserve of expertise in response to new crises.

The Group of 77 and China recognize that it is the primary responsibility of States to respond to the needs of their citizens in emergency situations. At the same time, international cooperation, not only in relation to the provision of funding, but also in terms of the sharing of best practices and the transfer of technology to developing countries, is also of great importance. Those should form part of a comprehensive package of response to the relief and development dimensions of humanitarian disasters.

The report of the Secretary-General in document A/60/227 addresses the issue of transition from relief to development. It makes some useful recommendations, including that the United Nations and donor Governments should enhance the level of preparedness of countries prone to natural disasters, particularly at the local level, by significantly increasing funding for preparedness activities. It also calls on Member States to implement the priorities set out in the Hyogo Framework for Action in support of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and, in particular, to incorporate practical disaster reduction steps into sustainable development and poverty reduction strategies, as well as disaster preparedness and response. We support that and other recommendations in the report.

We recognize the challenging role of the United Nations in responding to complex emergency situations. Efforts to respond to such situations must be balanced against the need to ensure the security and protection of humanitarian personnel. With that in mind, we welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General in establishing guidelines for complex missions and, at the same time, reiterate the need to ensure that humanitarian missions observe the relevant international legal instruments and principles in conducting multidimensional integrated peacekeeping missions.

We also take this opportunity to congratulate you, Sir, on the important contribution you made some years ago, in another capacity, in developing the framework for United Nations activities in humanitarian and disaster assistance. An important legacy of your involvement is resolution 46/182, which contains the guiding principles for the strengthening of the coordination of emergency assistance of the United Nations system. The Group of 77 and China reaffirm today the centrality of that resolution.

Finally, we take this opportunity to express our thanks and appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Egeland and his staff at OCHA for their outstanding and untiring efforts in coordinating humanitarian activities on behalf of the United Nations.

**The President**: I thank the representative of Jamaica for his words about resolution 46/182 and the basis it provides for the humanitarian work of the United Nations. Let me also, from this Chair, express my pride in having Jan Egeland as one of my successors in that important and sometimes sadly depressing function inside the United Nations.

**Sir Emyr Jones Parry** (United Kingdom): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and those countries that have aligned themselves with this statement.

The European Union would like to thank the Secretary-General for the reports submitted for consideration under this item. They clearly demonstrate the immense challenges faced by the humanitarian community in the last year, as well as the continuing need to provide more effective and predictable humanitarian assistance. The European Union would like to take this opportunity to express its condolences to and solidarity with all those affected by humanitarian emergencies in the last year. We would also like to thank all humanitarian personnel for their tireless and dedicated efforts to assist and protect vulnerable populations, often at great personal risk.

Events this year, most recently and starkly in Pakistan, have highlighted the importance of expanding and improving our capacity to respond

quickly and effectively to major disasters. The challenge to us all is to sustain our response and our commitment in the aftermath of a disaster. In Pakistan, the European Union is committed to supporting the United Nations renewed appeal for assistance with the ongoing tragedy as winter approaches. Similarly, the growing crises in southern Africa — often referred to as the triple threat — demonstrate yet again the urgent need for early preventative measures, with the clear lesson that early intervention is much less costly than responding later, once needs and suffering have escalated.

The European Union fully supports the Secretary-General's call in his report "In larger freedom" for a more predictable humanitarian response, including in the areas of standby arrangements, funding and coordination capacity. All of those elements are mutually reinforcing and must be pursued together.

In terms of standby capacity, the European Union values existing mechanisms, such as the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination teams, as well as the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group, but the EU also attaches great importance in terms of developing and sustaining disaster risk reduction, preparedness and response capacity at all levels. Experience has shown that more lives are saved in the aftermath of a disaster when response teams can deploy immediately, especially at the local and national levels. We recognize that the rapid response capacity of the international community still fails people in need of urgent assistance and we therefore call for enhanced support to the United Nations in its efforts to strengthen its response.

On funding capacity, we have been given a clear mandate from the Economic and Social Council and from world leaders at the September United Nations summit to improve the existing Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF). We welcome the Secretary-General's report on the proposed modalities for an upgraded CERF, which should enable quicker and more effective responses to humanitarian emergencies, and hope that it will become operational early in 2006. We also welcome the announcement of pledges, in principle, towards an upgraded CERF and invite further voluntary contributions to the Fund. From the European Union perspective, it is essential that the Fund's accountability structures work retroactively in order to facilitate one of the primary objectives of the upgraded CERF — to respond immediately to life-saving needs. An upgraded CERF should provide a useful addition to existing fast-track disbursement procedures, such as those provided by the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office.

The persistent underfunding of some emergencies, particularly in Africa, is especially concerning. The proposal that the upgraded CERF address critical humanitarian needs in underfunded emergencies is therefore welcome.

On coordination capacity, often a complex challenge, the response to recent disasters has shown that there is always room for improvement. In that context, one particular aspect to which the EU attaches great importance is the quality of humanitarian coordinators. Further efforts must be made to improve that critical function, especially in terms of training and support, and the right incentives must also be provided to attract the best people for that crucial job. Further efforts must also be made to improve the quality of, and therefore donor confidence in, the United Nations Consolidated Appeals Process. The Process must provide for a more inclusive and better coordinated assessment of need, and the projects contained therein must be better prioritized.

As donor Governments, we also recognize that we need to enhance coordination amongst ourselves. That is why we are committed to the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative. It provides an unparalleled opportunity to promote innovation and good practice in the way in which aid is provided and to enhance the predictability, adequacy and flexibility of humanitarian financing.

Lessons learned are also an important part of ensuring a more effective and predictable humanitarian response. In that respect, the European Union welcomes the Humanitarian Response Review. It has helped identify a number of gaps and weaknesses in the international response system, and we are pleased that the recommendations are now being actively pursued. In particular, the EU welcomes work already under way in identifying cluster, or sectoral, bids. We believe that is especially important in terms of ensuring sectoral capacity and leadership.

There are also a number of lessons to be learned in the use and coordination of military and civil defence assets. In some cases, the logistical support and expertise associated with such assets can prove

invaluable in terms of transporting relief assistance and in reaching remote and vulnerable communities.

The European Union fully accepts the need to make the international humanitarian system more predictable and effective in its response, including through lessons learned and the implementation of existing commitments. But those efforts will be in vain if we cannot ensure better respect for international humanitarian law, as well as reliable access and protection for civilians in need and for humanitarian workers. We strongly condemn attacks and acts of violence on humanitarian workers, which jeopardize not only their safety, but also the sustainability of relief operations. Such incidents must be immediately and effectively investigated and the perpetrators of such acts brought to justice.

Finally, this past year in particular has posed many challenges to the humanitarian community. We have not always risen to the challenge. We must therefore continue our efforts to improve the effectiveness and the predictability of humanitarian response. The European Union is determined to play its part to that end.

**Ms. Rouse** (Grenada): I have the honour to speak, on behalf of the States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that are Members of the United Nations, on agenda item 73 (a), "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations".

The CARICOM members wish to associate themselves with the statement made by the representative of Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on this agenda item.

The heads of State and Government, during the 2005 world summit, were in one accord regarding the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century. They reminded us that the problems facing the world had multiplied, natural disasters being one of them. We were also requested to seek new and innovative ways to deal with those problems, and hence we welcome the Secretary-General's reports on this agenda item.

We wish to make particular reference to the Secretary-General's report, contained in document A/60/432, on the improvement of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF), especially the call to address critical humanitarian needs in underfunded emergencies. We applaud the proposal put forward by Mr. Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for renaming the upgraded Fund as the Central Emergency Response Fund. We fully support efforts in the area of natural disaster mitigation, especially in the light of recent global trends. In commending the Emergency Relief Coordinator and his staff on their excellent performance thus far, we recognize the very difficult task which they face and resolve to continue our support for that department.

We recall General Assembly resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991, which states that

> "International relief assistance should supplement national efforts to improve the capacities of developing countries to mitigate the effects of natural disasters expeditiously and effectively and to cope efficiently with all emergencies. The United Nations should enhance its efforts to assist developing countries to strengthen their capacity to respond to disasters, at the national and regional levels, as appropriate." (*resolution 46/182, para. 18*)

CARICOM member States are indeed pleased that the United Nations agencies have continuously provided necessary assistance over the years and we must pay particular tribute to the United Nations Development Programme in the Caribbean for its sterling support. However, with the increased magnitude and frequencies of disasters in the region, we recognize the need for further collaboration with other regional agencies.

The 2005 world summit resolved to fully implement the Hyogo Declaration and the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015, adopted at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, in particular those commitments related to assistance to developing countries that are prone to natural disasters and disaster-stricken States in the transition phase towards sustainable physical, social and economic recovery, for risk reduction activities in post-disaster recovery and rehabilitation processes. We now have to ensure that this resolve is translated into action.

The CERF report clearly shows that the consolidated and flash appeals have been insufficient in meeting the needs of the various crises and

emergencies. The mechanism must be able to disburse funds in a rapid and transparent manner with the primary aim of saving lives and providing immediate humanitarian relief.

It is clear to this body that, in the near future, increased resources for rapid deployment of relief will be required and that it will therefore be necessary to establish not only a source of readily available funding, but proper mechanisms to ensure immediate access to those funds by disaster-stricken States.

CARICOM has noted with dismay the poor response to appeals following recent disasters in the Caribbean region, as was experienced by Grenada and Guyana, where the destruction impacted heavily on their economies. It saddens me to say that, to date, only a minor percentage of the pledges have been fulfilled.

CARICOM member States have, at several world summits and conferences, stressed the need for special and differential treatment for small island developing States due, in great part, to our vulnerability to natural disasters. The Secretary-General, in his report "In larger freedom", also made reference to the environmental and development challenges facing us in the form of climate change, recognizing that the countries that were most vulnerable included small island developing States.

We find ourselves in a unique position. Apart from our size, we are for the most part island States, and a region which is often visited by disasters brought about by wind, water or other forces of nature that threaten our very existence. We therefore make a solemn appeal to members of this body to join hands with us and work towards arriving at solutions to minimize the effects of those disasters, from which we have no means of escape. Small island States continually run the risk of being forgotten by the media and, in turn, by the international community, since our size does not attract sufficient attention. When Grenada was hit by Hurricane Ivan in September of 2004, it was the entire 344 square-kilometre island, with its 100,000 inhabitants, that sustained damage. All were affected. We are fully aware that preparedness is necessary. However, since we cannot prevent the disaster or predict its magnitude, the recovery process is therefore of paramount importance.

Disaster management is a complex portfolio, and though most countries have an established national disaster management agency, the magnitude of the disaster is sometimes way beyond their capabilities — hence the apparent state of paralysis which follows. We therefore welcome immediate intervention by the United Nations agencies when they are called upon to assist in such situations.

CARICOM wishes to commend those States that have pledged contributions to the Fund and encourage those that are in a position to do so to join the contributors' list. We are also grateful to those countries that have taken concrete steps in disaster mitigation and are working with CARICOM in that regard. CARICOM is pleased to lend its support to the upgraded Fund and to endorse the addition of a grant facility of $450 million, targeted at a total of $500 million, to be operational by early 2006. We also endorse the establishment of an advisory group of 12 experts, broadly representative of the humanitarian donor community, as well as technical expertise from countries affected by crises. We believe that that composition would contribute to a more balanced approach and be able to achieve better results.

We support the need for transparency, accountability and visibility of the Fund, the active involvement and guidance of the General Assembly, and the suggested annual CERF donors consultation in order to keep relevant partners updated and for necessary review. We are confident that, with strong and dedicated support from Member States, the newly revived Fund will be able to provide timely and more effective response to humanitarian emergencies.

In conclusion, CARICOM States resolve to work closely with the Emergency Relief Coordinator and other United Nations agencies to ensure the success of that new venture to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance.

**Mr. Siv** (United States of America): I thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive reports on humanitarian assistance. They help us to maintain attention on continuing needs and to explore how the United Nations system can better work to meet them. As a prominent contributor and participant in humanitarian action throughout the world, the United States recognizes many successes in saving lives and reducing suffering, but we also clearly see areas where the international community can improve its collective response.

In the past year, we have faced tremendous challenges. Protracted civil conflicts have provoked

some of the largest occurrences of forced displacement in recent times. Natural disasters have also had a destructive impact of exceptional scale. This year's hurricane season hit my country very hard. I thank the United Nations and the international community for the generous contributions to the relief effort in the south-eastern Gulf States.

The international community, with United Nations leadership, has met many of the challenges in the past year, but humanitarian needs continue to require our collective will and capacity to provide a more efficient and effective response, both at the management and technical levels. Within the broader context of United Nations reform, much discussion has revolved around ways to improve the United Nations humanitarian response system. The United States supports a stronger and more effective response in humanitarian crises.

We have followed with interest the proposal for an improved Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF). We believe that a centralized source of rapidly available funding could help effectively address urgent needs in rapid-onset emergencies and swiftly deteriorating crises. We look forward to further discussion on the operational modalities of the enhanced CERF and on how the Fund links to other initiatives, such as the Consolidated Appeals Process and the effort to standardize assessment methodologies. The approach to humanitarian reform should be comprehensive, aligning the benefits of the CERF alongside initiatives to broaden the donor base, secure additional voluntary resources, strengthen early warning systems, bolster response capacity, and enhance the overall coordination of disaster relief and mitigation efforts.

Financial resources are critical to addressing humanitarian needs, but effective response requires experienced humanitarian personnel on the ground making tough decisions, coordinating numerous actors and ensuring that the aid reaches persons most in need. Additionally, humanitarian personnel work in environments filled with enormous challenges, including lack of access, insecurity and difficult logistics. Those obstacles require that we prepare for and anticipate emergencies before they begin by training staff, increasing agency capacity to absorb additional funding, and better equipping responders to operate in challenging environments.

One clear lesson from the past year is that the United Nations system must be able to shift into emergency mode smoothly and efficiently when a situation deteriorates. The various operational components of the United Nations must be able to rapidly implement relief activities.

We have followed with equal interest recent discussions on reinforcing United Nations leadership for specific sectors of humanitarian activity — sectors that have historically suffered from ad hoc coordination and direction. We applaud initial efforts in that area and believe that, together, we can enhance the international response to meet needs in those critical sectors.

Perhaps the most pressing of those, and one that too often falls into a gap without sufficient leadership, is the protection of persons affected by natural disasters and civil strife. We support more coherent United Nations leadership in that area. Protection is a complex issue and involves a range of United Nations offices, other international organizations, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and non-governmental organizations. Within the United Nations, we believe that recent refinements to the collaborative approach strengthen the framework for addressing the assistance and protection needs of internally displaced persons, and we challenge United Nations agencies to work further towards that goal.

The ability to provide protection to vulnerable populations is also closely linked to the safety of relief workers. Initiatives to enhance funding mechanisms and clarify leadership roles will seem extraneous if we fail to safeguard the basic security of humanitarian personnel. The United States applauds the efforts of humanitarian workers throughout the world and recognizes that their daily work brings relief and hope to millions of people in need. We must do everything we can to ensure that humanitarian personnel are able to continue their invaluable work without becoming the victims or the targets of conflict. In the past few months, we have seen humanitarian workers come under direct attack in Darfur and northern Uganda. That cannot be tolerated. The United States is committed to strengthening the security and safety of humanitarian personnel, and we view the measures taken by the General Assembly as important steps in allowing United Nations personnel and other humanitarian workers to continue their critical work.

I would like to express our appreciation to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs — which you, Mr. President, once led with distinction and which is now under the leadership of Under-Secretary-General Jan Egeland — the other United Nations humanitarian agencies and fellow Member States for striving to seek improvements in the coordination of humanitarian assistance. As we continue those discussions, we must not address elements of humanitarian reform in isolation. Its components constitute a package that helps ensure that the allocation of resources is driven by solid needs assessments and prioritizations.

We reaffirm our support for the core humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. They provide the foundation for international humanitarian work and must continue to guide our efforts, especially as we strive to address the range of challenges we face today. Let us not lose sight of those straightforward yet profound values as we work together to strengthen humanitarian assistance to help the millions of people in need around the globe.

The United States is the largest single donor to humanitarian and development programmes that benefit the Palestinian people. Working within the United Nations system, our substantial financial contribution to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) amounted to $108 million in 2005. Since 1998, we have contributed $588 million to UNRWA's General Fund in support of its educational, health, and employment programmes serving 4.2 million Palestinian refugees.

In addition, through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), we have provided more than $1.7 billion in economic assistance since 1993. USAID operates six programmes for the benefit of the Palestinians: the promotion of democratic reform, infrastructure and water resources, the revitalization of the private sector, community services, health and training, and higher education. The United States encourages other countries, especially countries from the region, to increase their contributions to UNRWA's core budget and to other humanitarian and economic needs in that area.

**The President**: I particularly want to bring to the Assembly's attention the important work being done in the Sixth Committee on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel. I hope that we can conclude discussions soon and, by so doing, send a strong message on the importance of assuring the security and the safety of personnel serving the peoples around the world.

**Mr. Ozawa** (Japan): Japan believes that a holistic and comprehensive approach is necessary in our efforts to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations. Funding arrangements are an important part of the issue, but we should put this matter in the perspective of the overall picture.

We congratulate the Secretary-General for his bold report concerning the improvement of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF) (*A/60/87*). We also commend Under-Secretary-General Jan Egeland for his efforts to elaborate on the details of the proposal in his discussions with all regional groups. In essence, the proposal argues for a drastic transformation of the existing CERF. We are not ready to make pledges with respect to a reformed CERF, but we understand the good intentions behind the ideas and see some merits in the proposal. Japan will continue to participate seriously in the forthcoming discussions on that matter.

Japan believes that reform is also necessary in the areas of needs assessment and common strategy for humanitarian assistance. Without progress on those two fronts, an effective response is not really possible, even if there were sufficient financial resources and adequate assistance capacity.

The Niger food crisis is a case in point. The problem of insufficient funding has been aggravated by the tension between development policy goals on the one hand and humanitarian assistance requirements on the other. That tension hampered free food distribution for fear of distorting the local economy.

We have often discussed the gap between emergency relief and development. We think that this may not be a linear sequence of events. Even in a situation where efforts are focused on longer-term development, emergency relief may sometimes be needed, as we saw in the case of the Horn of Africa. We welcome intensified dialogue between humanitarian and development actors on ensuring timely needs assessment and achieving a common strategy for humanitarian assistance. In addition, in order to assess needs accurately, it is necessary to

ensure the participation of all stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations.

Japan also attaches great importance to the improvement of the coordination mechanism, in particular to the ongoing discussion on the cluster lead and the strengthening of the role of humanitarian coordinators. We welcome the recommendations of the Humanitarian Response Review on filling those gaps in the existing arrangements where responsibility for certain vital sectors for humanitarian assistance and protection remains unclear.

At the same time, the proposed cluster lead would require thorough discussion among humanitarian actors, including non-governmental organizations, as well as by the governing boards of all humanitarian entities, especially in terms of the proposal's impact on their core mandate. We hope that the Member States are kept up to date through consultations in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. We believe it is also important to strengthen the role of humanitarian coordinators while at the same time fully reflecting the views of humanitarian workers, especially those on the ground.

Japan believes that engagement with emerging donors and the private sector needs to be further promoted with a view to expanding the financial resources available for humanitarian assistance. We need to consolidate the positive trend observed in the response to the Indian Ocean tsunami and the earthquake in Pakistan by promoting even closer dialogue with those contributors that used to be outside the humanitarian circle. In that regard, it might be worth considering, when a major humanitarian crisis occurs, setting up a briefing session in a format open to all Member States, possibly using the framework of the Economic and Social Council.

Last but not least, Japan wishes to emphasize the importance of prevention and preparedness, especially in the context of natural disasters. The Hyogo Declaration and the Hyogo Framework for Action, adopted in January of this year, urge us to integrate risk reduction into post-disaster recovery and development strategies. Allocating relatively small amounts of resources to prevention and preparedness can lead to tremendous savings in terms of human lives and property.

I wish to conclude by expressing my Government's deep appreciation to all humanitarian workers, especially those on the ground helping people in need under difficult conditions.

**Mr. Amorós Núñez** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, Cuba associates itself with the statement made by the delegation of Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Over the years, in the consideration of issues involving humanitarian assistance, priority has been given to complex emergencies, while natural disasters have been held to be of secondary importance. The peoples of various brotherly countries of the Indian Ocean basin had to suffer a catastrophe of enormous dimensions before United Nations action on that issue began to be reassessed.

The impact of the current hurricane season on the Caribbean Basin, the Gulf of Mexico and Central America and the disastrous effects of the most recent South Asian earthquake require a radical change in the mode of planning and coordinating humanitarian assistance in the United Nations system. Under these circumstances, we must reaffirm the validity of the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality enshrined in General Assembly resolution 46/182.

Although nature's fury does not distinguish between developing and developed countries, the consequences of the series of natural disasters in recent years reflect as never before the grave crisis underlying the international sustainable development agenda — a crisis faced by the countries of the third world, who suffer the ravages of the unjust conditions resulting from the current international order, which undermines national capacities to respond immediately to the enormous challenges posed by the effects of natural disasters.

It is therefore essential that humanitarian assistance be accompanied by a serious and unconditional commitment to economic growth and sustainable development in developing nations. Without that, contributions for humanitarian assistance — which must not be earmarked — only serve to undermine resources destined for international cooperation for development.

The current situation requires that the transition from relief to development receive the attention it deserves. Major efforts by the international community will be needed to enable those recovering from the damage caused by natural disasters to recommence

their national plans for viable economic growth and to continue making progress towards sustainable development, which will generate the resources needed for a long-term response to the earthquake's consequences.

In that connection, it will be crucial to undertake measures to restore socio-economic activity in the affected communities, such as cancelling, significantly relieving or rescheduling external debt, providing countries with a grace period that will help accelerate their relief, reconstruction and development efforts; promoting a common effort among various new and additional sources of financial resources for affected nations, including the international financial organizations, particularly the World Bank; and granting trade facilities and temporary trade preferences for specific national products — particularly those from disaster-affected areas — in order to help rebuild their productive capacities and support labour recovery. Other actions could be initiated through UNICEF, UNESCO and other bodies, agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system to support disaster-affected children — particularly those who have been orphaned — with the aim of promoting their physical and mental development.

*Mr. Loizaga (Paraguay), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

The growing magnitude of the negative effects of natural disasters requires the strengthening of national prevention, mitigation and preparation activities and the implementation of the outcome of the second World Conference on Disaster Reduction, held this year in Japan. However, international cooperation mechanisms must also be strengthened. The experiences suffered as a result of the hurricanes that battered the Caribbean Basin, the Gulf of Mexico and Central America confirm that.

Assistance provided in solidarity with those who need it is one of the essential pillars of our country's foreign policy, and our cooperation programme has been ongoing for more than 40 years. In that spirit, and because of the impact of Hurricane Katrina, the Henry Reeve International Contingent of Doctors Specializing in Disaster Situations and Serious Epidemics was established on 19 September 2005. Its members will provide assistance to populations requesting it, not only in natural disaster situations, but also in other emergency situations such as the outbreak of epidemics or to help in the global fight against HIV/AIDS. Henry Reeve members have already gone to Pakistan to provide medical assistance to the victims of the earthquake there and to Guatemala to aid the victims of Hurricane Stan.

Moreover, Cuban specialists will soon join the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team. Cuba will contribute specialists and engineers, who will share Cuban national experience in assistance and emergency aid efforts, and doctors to save lives, ease pain, fight epidemics and provide essential health services for those who have lost everything and suffer the terrible effects of neglect. Their only reward will be to go home with the satisfaction of having done their duty. They will not demand the frivolous celebrity provided by coverage in the major international media. It is possible that they will receive no prizes or laurels for their humanitarian efforts; that is not what they seek. The gratitude of those whom they will heal and save will be enough for them.

The selfless solidarity of Cuba, a small, blockaded country of the third world, should serve as an example to spur other, immensely rich States and the international bodies to offer the necessary aid to those whom nature has harshly affected. It can be done; the suffering of the victims is in sharp contrast to the trillion dollars wasted annually on all kinds of armaments.

We need ongoing mobilization, a true spirit of human solidarity and a strong political commitment to solve the basic problems fuelling the incontrollable forces of natural disasters. Until that has been accomplished, the efforts of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance will be in vain.

**Mr. Al-Shamsi** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me, at the outset and on behalf of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates to thank the President of the General Assembly for his valuable efforts in directing the work of the present session. I should also like to thank the Secretary-General for his valuable reports on this agenda item.

I wish to associate myself with the statement made by the representative of Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The recent unprecedented natural disasters and the magnitude of the destruction and death that they have caused in both developing and developed countries have undeniably proved two facts. First, developing countries are not prepared to deal with natural disasters. Thus the damage caused by such disasters is considerable, and recovery from their devastating effects is slow. Secondly, countries need one another, regardless of their capacities. Hence, international cooperation is the safest and most appropriate solution to protect humanity from natural disasters and from disputes and conflicts among individuals and nations.

In that context, we would like to express our appreciation and gratitude for the work done by the United Nations and its personnel in the field of delivering relief and humanitarian assistance, whether at Headquarters or at disaster sites, and we would underline the principal role of the United Nations in strengthening and coordinating long-term humanitarian and relief assistance to affected countries.

In the meantime, we reaffirm the importance of implementing the recommendations of international conferences on international coordination in facing disasters, which call for the implementation of an international strategy that deals with natural disasters at all stages, from early warning to relief, reconstruction and development. Such an international strategy must include the necessary measures required for helping poor countries to build their institutional capabilities and to address the consequences of natural disasters and war.

In that regard, we urge donor countries and international financing institutions to increase their contributions in order to fund humanitarian and relief activities, in fulfilment of the principles of international solidarity and interdependence, and in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. We also emphasize the importance of settling disputes among nations and of eliminating the causes of armed conflicts, which have created humanitarian disasters, by strengthening the authority and role of international law.

The United Arab Emirates is one of the largest contributors to relief assistance activities in the world, as it has effectively participated in regional and international efforts aimed at providing long-term humanitarian and emergency relief assistance to all regions of the world. This has included providing contributions to United Nations humanitarian and development assistance agencies and extending direct financial and in-kind assistance to countries affected by natural disasters and armed conflicts, and for assisting in rehabilitation and reconstruction operations.

Total contributions made during the 2004-2005 period by the Government of the United Arab Emirates and the country's Red Crescent Society for reconstruction operations in Afghanistan, Iraq and some occupied Palestinian cities and for finalizing the fifth stage of the Emirates Solidarity Program for mine clearance in South Lebanon — which was completed in May 2004 and resulted in the removal of 61,829 mines in an area of 4 million square metres — have exceeded $500 million.

The Government of the United Arab Emirates has also assisted the victims of natural disasters in Iran and other countries of South-East Asia affected by the tsunami, as well as the victims of Hurricane Katrina and the recent earthquake in India and Pakistan. The Government has also extended direct development assistance to many developing countries through its national organizations, such as the Abu Dhabi Development Fund, which since its inception has provided financial assistance totalling $5 billion to 56 countries in the form of concessionary loans and grants.

The United Arab Emirates Red Crescent Society — the largest non-governmental charity agency in the country engaged in providing relief and foreign assistance — has extended total assistance in the year 2004 of 340 million dirhams, i.e. $100 million, to more than 95 countries, including those affected by, or recovering from, conflicts. The Society has also funded projects for rebuilding a number of Palestinian cities in the occupied territories for a total of $122 million.

As part of its international efforts aimed at supporting and coordinating humanitarian and relief assistance worldwide, the Government has established a relief warehouse in the city of Dubai for the provision of integrated services and facilities to national and international humanitarian organizations. It has recently established a supply warehouse for humanitarian assistance in Dubai that is used for storing pre-packaged American relief assistance material for immediate delivery to affected areas.

Following the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and the evacuation of some West Bank settlements, the international community expected to see some improvement in the tragic humanitarian conditions of the Palestinians. However, more than two months later, Palestinian living conditions have deteriorated miserably due to the continuing control of the Israeli forces over border checkpoints and commercial sites in Palestinian cities, as well as the continued imposition of repressive closure policies and restrictions on movement. Moreover, the continuing attacks on Palestinian citizens and their property and the policies of collective punishment policies and extrajudicial killings have resulted in the deaths of more than 4,000 innocent civilians, and tens of thousands more have been injured or disabled.

Moreover, Israel, the occupying Power, is continuing to build the illegal expansionist separation wall, which has resulted in the confiscation of Palestinian lands, the destruction of wells and an increase in the number of internally displaced persons. That has led to huge losses for the Palestinian economy, an increase in the number of Palestinian civilians, up to two thirds, who live under the poverty line, and the spread of malnutrition among large numbers of children.

According to international reports, the international humanitarian assistance provided to the Palestinians in the occupied territories is not adequate for alleviating their suffering. This can happen only if the Israeli occupation comes to a complete end and an independent and viable Palestinian State is established. We therefore call upon the international community once again to force Israel to immediately stop its attacks against civilians and to end its policy of closures and siege. It must cease building and dismantle the constructed part of the illegal expansionist wall, in accordance with internationally binding resolutions and the principles of international humanitarian law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention and human rights instruments, and to withdraw completely from all Arab territories occupied since 1967, in accordance with the relevant international resolutions. In the meantime, we urge donor countries and international financial institutions to continue providing necessary assistance to the Palestinian people until the Palestinian occupied territories are liberated and an independent Palestinian State is established, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

**Ms. Smith** (Australia): Please allow me to begin by again extending the Australian Government's condolences to the people affected by the South Asian earthquake, particularly in Pakistan.

The South Asian earthquake is the most recent in a string of severe and devastating natural disasters, including the Indian Ocean tsunami and numerous hurricanes and cyclones. Australia, as a country that itself is prone to natural disasters, is acutely aware of the threat they pose and of the importance of disaster mitigation and preparedness. If 2005 has taught the world anything, it is that disaster mitigation and emergency preparedness must be an even higher priority and must be integrated into development planning.

In the year since we last met to discuss humanitarian action, while there has been massive devastation and loss of life, there have also been incredible stories of survival and resilience. We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the international humanitarian community for its efforts in rising to the unprecedented challenges it has faced over the past 12 months. This includes in particular Australia's recognition of those national authorities that have worked courageously towards rebuilding their communities, restoring human dignity and alleviating the suffering of their peoples. This, we think, highlights the importance of building national capacities within the humanitarian system.

Australia continues to play its part in humanitarian response. We provide rapid and generous support for the survivors of crises and disasters, both within our region and globally. Most recently, Australia has provided assistance to Pakistan, and earlier this year we responded rapidly to the Indian Ocean tsunami.

Farther afield, we have also assisted the responses to protracted crises in Africa, including in the Sudan, the Niger, Malawi and in southern Africa more broadly.

While the international system has responded to many natural disasters over the past 12 months, those disasters have also served to remind us just how crucial effective and timely humanitarian response capacity is,

if lives are to be saved, livelihoods protected and communities restored.

I should also make clear that we recognize that it is not just in the case of natural disasters that the humanitarian community must be able to respond, but also in complex emergencies, where there are many unique challenges. The complex environments in which we undertake humanitarian action highlight the need to continue to strive for a strengthened humanitarian response.

Strengthening humanitarian response is the key objective of the current humanitarian reform agenda outlined by the Secretary-General and led by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Australia is a strong supporter of humanitarian reform. Our interest is in demonstrated results on the ground and our goal is to better enable affected communities to rebuild their lives and restore dignity.

We seek to achieve this through increasingly effective application of resources and heightened levels of coordination and collaboration between partner Governments and humanitarian institutions. Good progress has been made in a number of areas. However, we should continue to strive for further improvement. We encourage the United Nations to continue to build coordination and collaboration links during quiet periods as well as during times of crisis.

We agree with the key elements of the reform agenda. We need improved capacity, improved coordination and improved financing. We see them very much as an interdependent and interconnected package. Each element is, if you will, a leg of a three-legged stool. All elements of the agenda must be taken forward at the same time; none can stand alone. Our stool needs three strong legs.

The Australian Government considers more effective coordination, in particular a stronger Humanitarian Coordinator system, essential to improving response. We are eager to hear more from OCHA on the progress of this work. Similarly, steps to improve the capacity of the system and of individual agencies to respond in key sectors is important — we are watching with interest the use of the sector lead model in Pakistan and are looking forward to an update from agencies on this and other efforts to improve capacity. Finally, but no less important, we agree that humanitarian financing has to be more timely and predictable. A key initiative to this end is the upgrade of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF). We support, in principle, the CERF; we are encouraged by the contributions that donors have made to date and, subject to further discussions on its operation, are considering an Australian contribution.

We stand ready to work with OCHA, other humanitarian agencies and other donors to ensure that our humanitarian reform stool is strong and sturdy. We also continue to be strong and unequivocal supporters of the key principles of humanitarian action. We are committed to continuing to work with others to ensure the protection of civilians, unimpeded access for humanitarian actors and the importance of an effective approach to protect and provide assistance for internally displaced persons. In this spirit, we encourage stakeholders to continue dialogue through a truly collaborative framework to improve the relevance, effectiveness and responsiveness of humanitarian action.

Finally, I would like to highlight the important issue of the transition from emergency support to development. The challenges of this phase cannot be underestimated, as we have seen in the aftermath of the tsunami. Coordination, capacity and financing are also critical during this period, and we must all work together to ensure that transition is managed as effectively as emergency response.

**Mr. Chulkov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): This year is a special one for the international humanitarian community. We are on the threshold of decisions that should qualitatively improve existing mechanisms and instruments for international humanitarian cooperation. After more than a decade, we once again draw the conclusion that additional measures of a global nature are needed to enhance this work.

In particular, we are discussing an important aspect of international cooperation, namely the health and epidemiological consequences of disasters. Russia, within the context of its presidency of the Group of Eight in 2006, intends to devote constant attention to this question.

In the aftermath of the disasters caused by dangerous natural phenomena that we have experienced this year and last year, it has become clear that practical steps are needed to strengthen the capacity to react to disasters, so that upon requests from Governments we can quickly launch a

humanitarian operation in any part of the globe with the right management capacity, on the basis of preliminary comprehensive needs assessments and making use of cutting-edge technologies and services in this area.

In order to cope with this job effectively, Member States need to improve humanitarian coordination mechanisms at all levels. We consider that assigning a United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator or Resident Coordinator with the appropriate authority to coordinate the humanitarian agencies working in the field would serve to provide a better humanitarian response. However, we believe that this work can be effective only if there is a strong partnership between the United Nations country team and the host Government. The same also applies to post-conflict peacebuilding and rehabilitation, where the role of Humanitarian Coordinators and Resident Coordinators has been reassessed. Their appointment in multidimensional peacekeeping operations as Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretary-General in the field can enhance effectiveness and the smooth transition from a humanitarian assistance operation to development activities, which we see as a guarantee of success for the whole set of efforts relating to international humanitarian activities, post-conflict peacebuilding and the establishment of a basis for dynamic socio-economic development.

These measures cannot be taken without a change of attitude towards the question of funding international humanitarian activities. Stable access to financial resources is essential for expeditious and proper humanitarian disaster response and for dealing effectively and in a timely fashion with the consequences of complex emergencies. And here we agree with the assessment of the Secretary-General, that the current system for funding humanitarian activities has placed certain restrictions on the ability of humanitarian organizations to mobilize quickly the resources they need. A source of predictable humanitarian funding is needed to ensure timely assistance to those in need. Although we continue to regard the inter-agency consolidated appeals process as the main mechanism for mobilizing financial resources, we agree that these goals can be achieved through a reorganization of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, by adding a grant component.

We support the basic parameters for the reorganization of the Fund as well as its objectives, which are to facilitate a rapid response to people's needs at the early stages of humanitarian operations and to give special attention to so-called forgotten or chronically underfunded emergencies. We agree with a phased approach to its reorganization.

However, in order to give a certain degree of independence to the functioning of the renewed Fund and the entire global humanitarian machinery, we think that it is extremely important to have criteria on which this work would be based, taking into account that we are talking about fundamental changes in its functioning. Accordingly, we deem it exceptionally important that these criteria be agreed upon within an open-ended intergovernmental process. That would lend greater legitimacy to the future activities in the operational management of the Fund.

The United Nations and its Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) play a key role in efforts to strengthen international humanitarian cooperation. We believe that OCHA should continue to give priority attention to the fundamental principles for the provision of humanitarian assistance — that is, humanity, neutrality and impartiality, as well as independence. This fully applies to the challenges on the agenda of the humanitarian community. We cannot allow situations to arise that would undermine the trust of Member States in these principles.

Nowadays, the need to forecast emergency situations and for disaster preparedness is becoming increasingly evident. Here, we support measures to strengthen mechanisms for planning for and dealing with emergency situations caused by disasters. We call for stronger national systems for early warning, damage assessment and the mitigation of the consequences of disasters, as well as for more international cooperation in this area. All these measures were considered at the Hyogo World Conference on Disaster Reduction held in January 2005.

We support the work being done by UNESCO and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission to launch a regional Indian Ocean tsunami early warning system. We view this system as an important stage in the establishment of a global disaster early warning system. Accordingly, we look forward to the Third International Conference on Early Warning, to be held Bonn next March.

This morning the representative of Belarus introduced for consideration by the Assembly a draft resolution on the strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster (*A/60/L.19*). Nearly 20 years after the tragedy, this problem is still very much with us, because the consequences of the disaster continue to negatively impact upon people's health and the environment and hamper the steady socio-economic development of the affected areas of Belarus, Russia and Ukraine. A key element of the policy of the Russian Government regarding Chernobyl is the consistent integration of the radiation factor in activities to ensure the full recovery of affected areas, the cost of which, in our country alone over these years, has exceeded $5 billion.

This work has yielded results. The main emphasis now is on the socio-psychological rehabilitation of the population and the creation of a solid foundation for the sustainable development of the affected areas. A firm scientific foundation for the recovery strategy is important for dealing successfully with the consequences of the disaster. We are pleased that our own experience here is consistent with the conclusions of authoritative scientific forums. This applies, first of all, to the outcome of the Chernobyl Forum, which took place in Vienna last September under the aegis of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Clearly, the recommendations of the Forum will be very useful for us. However, I wish to emphasize that work to test and to coordinate the results of scientific research will still be relevant in the future.

International cooperation on Chernobyl is multifaceted and, throughout all these years, has been of great practical importance. We are pleased with the attention given by the world community to this problem through the development of scientific contacts, the provision of assistance in the area of public health, and the support we have received for our efforts to rehabilitate our agriculture and to establish information exchange networks. We would view the consensus adoption of this draft resolution as a demonstration of the solidarity of the international community with the work of the affected countries and the willingness to continue to give Chernobyl necessary international attention.

A special catalytic and coordinating role is traditionally assigned to the United Nations here, particularly to the United Nations Development Programme, which last year assumed the functions of coordinating international cooperation in this area. We express gratitude to the leadership of the Programme for the high level of interaction in achieving our common goals to improve the lives of the people in the affected territories.

We would also like to say from this rostrum that we support the two other draft resolutions, on strengthening emergency relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and prevention, one in the aftermath of the South Asian earthquake disaster (*A/60/L.18*), and the other in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster (*A/60/L.20*). The Russian Federation is a sponsor of both, and we hope that all delegations will support all three draft resolutions currently being considered.

**Mr. Latheef** (Maldives): The frequency and magnitude of natural disasters occurring all over the world are increasing at an alarming rate. Those that occurred in the past year alone are testimony to this reality. These disasters have caused immeasurable devastation and taken a heavy toll in terms of human lives and property. The suffering and pain they leave behind are deep and long-lasting. The burdens imposed on individuals, communities and countries are enormous, and the challenges at the national and international levels are formidable.

Natural disasters know no boundaries. They impact indiscriminately on both the poor in the South and the rich in the North. Harsh weather conditions are experienced by millions of peoples all over the world, causing despair and suffering. However, the level of a country's development has a bearing on the degree to which such suffering can be sustained. Small, less developed countries such as my own suffer more severely due to their weak infrastructure, limited resources and their inability to recover.

Although the loss of life and extent of damage in my country in the wake of the Indian Ocean tsunami were small in quantitative terms, compared to others affected by the disaster, it has now become evident that in economic and relative terms, the impact of the tsunami on the Maldives is far worse, primarily as a result of the country's narrow economic base. More than 62 per cent of the gross domestic product was totally destroyed, and development progress — a blessing over the past two decades — has now been

thwarted. Over 7 per cent of the population remain internally displaced, while a third of the entire population need help. Twelve islands need complete resettlement, while the socio-economic infrastructure must be rebuilt in more than one quarter of the inhabited islands.

As we approach the first anniversary of the tsunami disaster, the country's situation has not improved. It is now clear that it will take time for the country to regain the level of development progress that it had enjoyed before the disaster struck.

Resettlement and rehabilitation of displaced communities remains a daunting task. Providing permanent shelter and rebuilding livelihoods require careful community consultations in order to avoid any involuntary resettlement. This has been one important reason for slowing down the pace of implementing the programme. At the same time, the capacity of the Government, due to the limited human resources available, as well as the logistical difficulties of inter-island transportation, are also proving to be major hurdles in the implementation of the recovery and reconstruction programme. Proper training and technical assistance in local capacity-building is therefore now a priority for us.

There is also a major funding gap in our national recovery and reconstruction programme. Of a total of $470 million estimated for the programme, nearly one third has yet to be pledged. It should be noted that the Maldives is the only country experiencing an unpledged funding gap for tsunami recovery plans. While we express our sincere appreciation to our development partners and to the entire international community for the most generous assistance that they have already extended to us, we would like to call upon the international community for further support to help us bridge this funding gap as soon as possible.

Our economy, which had been growing at an average of 7 per cent per annum during the past two decades, is now expected to register a 3 to 4 per cent negative growth rate this year. Rising oil prices, unforeseen tsunami-related expenditures and revenue shortfalls from the tourism sector are creating significant, alarmingly intense fiscal pressures. As a direct result, we are now faced with an acute financial crisis for the first time in our history, and we are forced to appeal for budgetary support from our partners and friends. This assistance is in addition to the funding we require for our recovery and reconstruction efforts.

Addressing the challenges unleashed by natural disasters of such epic proportions requires urgent and timely action by the international community on an epic scale as well. Shifting from emergency disaster response to more proactive disaster prevention, risk reduction and mitigation will, in our view, be the key to success. A more comprehensive and coordinated approach to disaster management needs to be developed. Disaster risk management, rather than ad hoc humanitarian issues, should become an integral part of our long-term development policies. The full implementation of the Hyogo Declaration and the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 would, we believe, contribute to that end.

We also call on the international community to make every effort to ensure the setting up of the Indian Ocean tsunami early warning system, as well as the worldwide multihazard early warning system, as soon as possible. My country, the Maldives, pledges its readiness to do its utmost to make this a reality, since we believe that such a system will not only save lives in such disasters but also help economies such as ours, which depend on tourism for their survival, to enhance confidence in the industry.

The central role of the United Nations in extending humanitarian and disaster relief assistance cannot be overemphasized. The rapid response of the United Nations in the wake of natural disasters last year, in particular the Indian Ocean tsunami, was remarkable and deserves much praise, recognition and admiration. The critical role being played by Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator Jan Egeland and his dedicated staff at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs are worthy of mention.

We believe that further strengthening the Organization's rapid response capacity should be a priority for the international community. Only a well-staffed, well-funded and well-equipped system can ensure the ability to respond promptly and effectively. In this regard, the Maldives fully supports the proposal of the Secretary-General for improving the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, since we sincerely believe that it would further contribute to strengthening the Organization's coordination and humanitarian response capacity.

The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Tsunami Recovery, His Excellency Mr. William Jefferson Clinton, and his able team have brought a much-needed boost to the efforts of the United Nations to help the countries affected by the tsunami. We sincerely thank President Clinton for his untiring commitment to this cause.

Transparency, proper coordination and accountability are crucial for achieving better and faster results. In this regard, my country is extremely pleased with the work being done by the Global Consortium for Tsunami-Affected Countries, set up by Special Envoy President Clinton. We believe this important tool will help sustain the political will of the international community to support medium- and long-term rehabilitation, reconstruction and risk reduction efforts by the affected countries. We are also happy with the financial tracking system, known as the Development Assistance Database, now in place in the region, including the Maldives. We are convinced that it will ensure the much-needed financial transparency and accountability and boost the confidence of the donor community and private contributors.

International efforts in providing humanitarian assistance and disaster risk management need to be supplemented at regional and subregional levels. Regional cooperation can play an important role in this regard. We are happy to note that in the South Asia region, which has experienced two of the world's worst natural disasters in a matter of ten months, the thirteenth summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), which concluded yesterday in Dhaka, highlighted the importance of cooperating in disaster preparedness and disaster management and decided to establish a regional disaster management centre in India. We believe that centre will boost confidence in the region and help realize the early establishment of an early warning system. Thanks go to the Indian Government for taking the initiative.

Over the past two decades, the Government and the hard- working people of the Maldives, with the most generous help from the international community, have transformed the Maldives into a vibrant country. As members are aware, just six days before the tsunami struck, the General Assembly decided to remove the Maldives from the list of Least Developed Countries, primarily on the basis of the country's performance in development. At that time, the country's gross domestic product was growing at a remarkable rate and our future looked very promising. We were also among the few countries on track to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

However, with the devastation caused by the tsunami, our situation has become very dire. Instead of proceeding with the smooth transition process after having graduated from the list of least developed countries, we are now totally tied up in the enormous task of recovery and reconstruction. We have no choice. While it is difficult to determine an exact time frame required to reach pre-tsunami levels, we assure the international community that we will once again, with their generous assistance, recover and rebound from this disaster in the shortest possible time and proceed with the graduation process as recommended.

We are most delighted that the international community has heard our plea for help and has agreed to postpone the commencement of the smooth transition period for three years, which we think is reasonable. We understand that the Assembly will take the formal decision in that regard shortly. We sincerely thank the international community, the members here, for the understanding and solidarity they have extended to us.

Humanity has the power and ability to limit, manage and prevent natural disasters. Ironically, it also has the power to cause disasters. The tool we need to limit, manage and prevent disasters is political will. If we can fulfil just our commitment to protect and preserve the global environment, achieve sustainable development and reduce and eliminate poverty — a commitment we have all undertaken at various summits and conferences over the past decade — that would, in our view, make a world of difference.

**Mr. Yao Wenlong** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation would like to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for the reports he has submitted under the current agenda item. We associate ourselves with the statement made by Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Here, I would like to make three points in connection with this agenda item.

First, with regard to strengthening the coordination of United Nations humanitarian assistance, in recent years the world has been hit by frequent major natural disasters. The Indian Ocean tsunami and the recent massive earthquake in South

Asia took the lives of hundreds of thousands of people and resulted in huge losses to many countries. In addition, the floods, hurricanes, snowstorms, locust infestation and droughts that have occurred across the globe have caused widespread devastation and a loss of livelihood for hundreds of millions of people. The frequency of natural disasters has increased demands for the humanitarian assistance provided by the international community and severely challenged the capacity of the United Nations humanitarian assistance system.

However, the level of relief operations in the wake of the Indian Ocean tsunami and the South Asia earthquake has demonstrated the immense potential of the international community, as well as the important role of the leadership and coordination of the United Nations in that regard. The Chinese delegation commends Under-Secretary-General Egeland and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) under his leadership, for their tireless efforts in securing emergency funding and in providing and coordinating humanitarian assistance. We will, as always, support the work of OCHA.

Since more and more organizations and agencies are taking part in humanitarian assistance work, it becomes ever more important that relief assistance to disaster-affected countries and areas be well coordinated. Therefore, it is necessary to further strengthen the leading role of OCHA and the resident coordinators for humanitarian assistance to enable them to work effectively in coordinating the relief activities of the relevant bodies and agencies of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and civil society. It is important to clearly define their respective responsibilities in order to reduce overlap and to help Governments of affected countries make the best use of international assistance in their post-disaster relief, recovery and reconstruction efforts.

Secondly, emergency humanitarian assistance entails substantial funding requirements. Both the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF) and the Consolidated Appeal Process, established in accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/182, have played an important role in the last decade or so.

The CERF has guaranteed timely funding for relief agencies so they may respond promptly to emergencies. The Consolidated Appeal Process has been an effective financing and planning mechanism for United Nations humanitarian assistance agencies. However, the funding provided through that channel has been steadily declining in recent years, severely hampering the relief, recovery and reconstruction efforts of disaster-affected countries. Here, the Chinese delegation would like to appeal to donor countries that have the means to do so to demonstrate generosity and make more funds available for humanitarian assistance to disaster-affected developing countries, especially the least developed countries.

The recommendations for upgrading the CERF, as proposed by the Secretary-General in his report (*A/60/432*), are an important and integral part of the reform programme for humanitarian assistance operations and are of positive significance to the further strengthening of United Nations humanitarian relief coordination and response capabilities.

Concerning the proposed Central Emergency Response Fund, further details need to be articulated with regard to the scale of financing in the grant component, recommendations for loan and grant facilities, the operation of the Fund, and its administration and management procedures. It is very important that all countries show their support in that regard, and we hope that through joint efforts, the Fund will be able to begin operations and achieve expected results.

Thirdly, strengthening international and regional cooperation is an effective means to respond to natural disasters. When providing assistance to affected countries, the international community should also pay attention to their capacity for dealing with natural disasters. It is important to help central and local governments of disaster-affected countries build up their capacities in disaster prevention, relief and management.

While ensuring that relief assistance is properly delivered, attention should also be given to disaster prevention and reduction, including helping the affected countries develop medium- and long-term plans for disaster reduction and establishing national and regional mechanisms for the monitoring, prevention and assessment of major disasters.

The United Nations enjoys clear advantages in the areas of disaster prevention, relief and reduction. It has extensive experience in policy formulation and programme design and implementation and has well-

established mechanisms. Hence it should play a greater role in the future.

China is also a disaster-prone developing country. This year, floods alone have affected more than 200 million people and resulted in direct economic losses of $17 billion. Even so, the Chinese Government has, to the extent of its capacity, provided emergency humanitarian assistance to other disaster-stricken countries. The Chinese Government provided assistance in kind and cash valued at $83.1 million to countries affected by the Indian Ocean tsunami, including a $20-million donation provided through the United Nations multilateral system. In the immediate aftermath of the massive earthquake that struck Pakistan, the Chinese Government provided emergency humanitarian assistance totalling $6.2 million in cash and kind and dispatched search-and-rescue teams to the disaster areas.

In addition, the Chinese Government has provided $500,000 and relief goods worth 500,000 yuan through the United Nations system. All of that is a clear demonstration of the sympathy, solidarity and friendship of the Chinese Government and people with the Governments and peoples of the affected countries. The Chinese Government will continue, together with other countries, to actively participate in international and regional cooperation in disaster prevention, relief and reduction. We will do our part to help disaster-affected countries overcome natural disasters, rebuild their homes and return to normalcy.

**Mr. Chimphamba** (Malawi): I have the honour to take the floor on agenda item 73(a) on behalf of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) members Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, the United Republic of Tanzania, Swaziland, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe and my own country, Malawi.

Let me thank the Secretary-General for the informative reports before the Assembly that ably outline the progress made and challenges remaining in the efforts of the United Nations to coordinate and strengthen humanitarian emergency assistance at all levels.

In the last 12 months alone, the entire global community has witnessed a series of particularly large and destructive disasters requiring rapid and coordinated humanitarian interventions. Those disasters have reminded us all of the vulnerability of human life to natural disasters and also of the disproportionate effects they have on poor people. Clearly, more determined efforts are required to address the loss of livelihoods and quickly bring the situation back to normalcy.

SADC would like to stress the importance of the discussions of humanitarian policies and activities in the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. We would like to stress that the resolutions and decisions adopted in these meetings can be meaningful only if Member States ensure their full implementation.

While acknowledging the various serious crises in other parts of the world, I would like to focus on the drought-induced food insecurity situation in a number of SADC countries. The Secretary-General, in his report contained in document A/60/89, notes that the humanitarian community vowed after the 1992-1993 drought that it would never allow a similar food insecurity situation to happen again. However, a decade later, a regional crisis of immense proportions has happened again.

Clearly, something was missed in the responses. Our view is that the United Nations response must be either entirely different or radically scaled up in order to make a difference in supporting national and community capacities to enable a multisectoral response to the current and future humanitarian crises. We also believe that communities and households must be placed squarely at the centre of programme design, analysis and implementation. SADC would like to render its full support to the notion that the dichotomy of humanitarian and development assistance must be overcome and replaced by more innovative and simultaneous humanitarian and development action that takes into consideration the short-term shocks and the long-term challenges.

In view of that, besides launching regional appeals for food aid, SADC is focusing on programmes aimed at mitigating the food insecurity situation in the long term, including operationalizing the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan and, in particular, the formulation of the Food Agriculture and Natural Resources Business Plan. In addition, SADC is focusing on increasing sustainable agricultural financing and investment in line with the African

Union Maputo Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security of July 2003.

Over and above emergency interventions under the Regional Humanitarian Strategic Framework for Southern Africa, the humanitarian community is mounting its response through country-specific initiatives, including flash appeals and consolidated appeals. A number of donor Governments have responded favourably to the appeals and we are grateful for that. Of concern, however, is the fact that the appeals remain critically underfunded. We would therefore like to appeal to the international community to urgently address the shortfalls.

SADC applauds the Special Envoy for Humanitarian Needs in Southern Africa, Mr. James Morris, for the special work he is doing in raising the awareness of the international community on the current situation and its underlying causes. We note with appreciation the work done to develop the inter-agency regional humanitarian strategic framework for southern Africa. That is an initiative that needs the meaningful support of the international community, especially given that it takes short-term responses into consideration, whilst preventing and mitigating future vulnerabilities.

Indeed, the experience of the donor response to the Indian Ocean tsunami of 26 December, 2004, clearly indicated that donors are capable of large-scale, fast and flexible response. It is our sincere hope that the donor community will maintain the high standards so established as it goes about addressing any crisis, humanitarian or otherwise, regardless of its magnitude.

We recognize the important role of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and would like to urge it to continue to make efforts to broaden its donor base. It is our view that the Office should benefit from adequate and more predictable funding. We therefore appeal to the donor community to support OCHA generously.

SADC takes note of progress made by donors to improve their policies and practices of good donorship, including under the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative. We believe that this is a positive initiative which, when implemented, should enhance the delivery of humanitarian assistance. SADC would also like to underline the importance of international cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development. In that regard, we would like to endorse the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report (*A/60/227*).

We welcome the Hyogo Declaration and the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters, adopted at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, held in January 2005, which identifies strategic objectives and priority areas to reduce disaster risks in the next 10 years.

In conclusion, we would like to emphasize the fact that humanitarian crises must be tackled with common actions and joint resolve. Existing capacity gaps need to be filled by strengthening existing partnerships and increasing the involvement of the private sector.

**Mr. Maurer** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): We welcome the holding of this annual debate on the strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian assistance. We believe that a great deal has been done in this field in the past year, notably in emergency situations of unprecedented size and complexity. We would like to express our gratitude for the work done by humanitarian personnel on behalf of millions of people in distress throughout the world.

We would like also to thank Mr. Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, and his colleagues for the remarkable work undertaken and for his continued leadership in the humanitarian field.

Access to civilian populations and the security conditions in which humanitarian organizations operate remain largely unsatisfactory and very worrisome. It is clear that long-term efforts must be made to ensure strict compliance with international humanitarian law by all the actors involved. We believe also that a determined and long-term commitment by the international community is necessary with respect to international policy in areas such as security, sustainable development and human rights.

We are encouraged by the provisions on these two fundamental issues contained in the final outcome document of the High-level Meeting held in mid-September, and we urge that they be implemented in a concerted and determined manner by all Member States.

Proposals regarding the adjustment of international humanitarian aid capacities are currently under discussion. Such proposals are welcome, and we

support the objectives specified. However, it is important that those objectives fully take into account the diversity of the humanitarian system, the specific roles and mandates of International Movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent institutions, and the role played by non-governmental organizations and by local and national actors. Given that emergency situations take a variety of forms, we believe that such an adjustment process should, above all, enhance and strengthen the collective response of all actors involved, taking account of their comparative advantages, their mandates and their particular skills.

With respect to the reform of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF), Switzerland has announced its intention to make available to CERF, at the appropriate time, the sum of 5 million Swiss francs. However, we believe that there is a need for more detailed discussions with all stakeholders so as to clarify its parametres of action and its specific working procedures, in particular its internal and external accountability mechanisms.

The cluster approach also deserves to be tested on the ground and the lessons learned in the implementation phase — such as those drawn from the current response to the earthquake that hit South Asia on 8 October — should be rapidly incorporated in order to optimize the international response system. We encourage the organizations and countries concerned not to overlook the central role that local and national capacities can play in the context of humanitarian response.

Moreover, while we support the humanitarian coordinator system and an improved definition of that function within the United Nations country team, we wish also to stress the need to maintain the independence of humanitarian action in the framework of integrated United Nations missions. In our view, it would be useful also to further clarify the relationship between United Nations and non-United Nations members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee at the strategic and operational levels as well as on the ground with regard to the establishment of accountability mechanisms.

Finally, we would like to stress the importance that Switzerland attaches to the preservation of a system of humanitarian assistance that is based on, and implemented according to, the principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence and whose purpose is to save lives and preserve human dignity in all circumstances.

**Mr. Laurin** (Canada) (*spoke in French*): This year, natural disasters of unprecedented scale and ongoing conflicts have forced millions of people to seek humanitarian assistance. The Indian Ocean tsunami, the food crisis in the Sahel, the earthquake in South Asia and protracted conflicts such as those in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Darfur region of the Sudan are just a few of the crises that have stretched humanitarian response capacities to their limits. These crises have also highlighted the undeniable need to prioritize disaster management and mitigation.

Reinforcing the coordination of humanitarian assistance within the United Nations has long been a Canadian foreign policy priority. We therefore welcome the efforts made over the past year to strengthen the international humanitarian system, with a particular focus on ensuring more a predictable, timely and effective United Nations response.

The humanitarian response review is an important undertaking that has spotlighted issues requiring immediate solutions. It has made a number of useful recommendations that require action on our part. We look to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to provide us with an integrated humanitarian reform action plan outlining how OCHA, along with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, will implement those recommendations as well as those contained in the Secretary-General's report.

We congratulate the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on their efforts to advance the cluster approach. Canada enthusiastically welcomes any proposal aimed at improving existing structures by making them more predictable and more accountable. We look forward to a more thorough dialogue with Member States on its operational and budgetary implications. The current situation in South Asia provides an opportunity to see how well this new approach will work.

(*spoke in English*):

Canada strongly supports the Secretary-General's proposal to expand the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF) and appreciates the efforts made by OCHA to incorporate Member States' views in the

report. We view the expanded CERF as one important tool to achieve more timely and equitable humanitarian funding, an issue at the heart of good humanitarian donorship.

We intend to make a significant contribution to the Fund in 2006. We are prepared to make multi-year commitments to the CERF if we are satisfied with its operations in the first year and if we see continued improvements in the Consolidated Appeal Process and the needs assessments which underpin them.

The CERF can only be as effective as the analysis that guides its allocations. In order to allocate funds to where the needs are greatest, we have to agree on what those needs are and how best to address them. There have been efforts to strengthen humanitarian needs assessments over the past few years, for example through the Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transition (SMART) initiative. Canada believes we must refocus our energy on this issue to ensure that scarce humanitarian resources are indeed being allocated where needs are greatest.

There must also be a renewed commitment to strengthen the Consolidated Appeal Process, which remains the most important tool for ensuring strategic, coordinated and effective humanitarian response. There have been significant improvements to the Process over the past several years, yet quality remains inconsistent. Neither of these two issues — CERF or the Consolidated Appeal Process — was explicitly addressed in the Humanitarian Response Review, although addressing them is critical to ensuring more effective humanitarian action.

Finally, let me underscore the importance of strengthening the role and capacities of humanitarian and resident coordinators. This was highlighted in the Humanitarian Response Review, which made specific recommendations for follow-up. Over the next year, we would like to see clear progress in the selection and training of Humanitarian and Resident Coordinators.

The Consolidated Appeal Process, the CERF and the clusters are all tools that should enhance the humanitarian response of the United Nations. Above all, these tools and the other components must form a cohesive whole that is more effective than the sum of its parts. We believe that ongoing commitment from all Member States — be they new or traditional donors — remains essential.

It is important to stress that all of these improvements will be of little consequence to affected populations if we do not put the protection of civilians at the heart of the international agenda. There are still too many flagrant violations of international humanitarian law, and impunity continues to be present in several conflicts. In too many conflicts civilians continue to pay the price, as do humanitarian workers. Rampant sexual and gender-based violence remain a reality in a number of contexts. Consequently, while the fifth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1296 (2000) is coming to a close, the protection of civilians remains a source of serious concern for Canada, which will continue to maintain its commitment in this area.

Let me conclude by reiterating Canada's commitment to continue working with the Emergency Relief Coordinator and Member States in strengthening the humanitarian system. Let us make a collective commitment to ensure that all our efforts lead to real change in the lives of people affected by crisis everywhere.

*The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.*

United Nations A/60/PV.52

General Assembly
Sixtieth session

Official Records

52nd plenary meeting
Monday, 14 November 2005, 3 p.m.
New York

*President:* Mr. Eliasson ..... (Sweden)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Hamidon (Malaysia), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.*

**Agenda item 73 *(continued)***

**Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance**

**(a) Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations**

**Reports of the Secretary-General (A/60/86, A/60/87, A/60/89, A/60/227, A/60/302, A/60/432)**

**(c) Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster**

**Report of the Secretary-General (A/60/443)**

**Draft resolution (A/60/L.19)**

**(d) Assistance to the Palestinian people**

**Report of the Secretary-General (A/60/90)**

**Mr. Aliyev** (Azerbaijan): Recent humanitarian emergencies have demonstrated the overall capability of the humanitarian community to launch a massive response when called upon. However, it is quite obvious that the quality of response needs improvement. Humanitarian response does not always meet the basic needs of affected populations in a timely way. It varies considerably from crisis to crisis, and current capacity levels are not always sufficient to meet the demands of major emergencies occurring at the same time. While some of the factors affecting the response are specific to individual crises, some of the key challenges seem to be systemic in nature.

The Humanitarian Response Review has therefore highlighted a number of well-known and long-standing gaps that the international humanitarian system has failed to address so far, in particular the low level of preparedness of the humanitarian organizations in terms of human resources and sectoral capacity. Furthermore, the way in which humanitarian crisis response is funded affects the system's ability to react promptly, effectively and in a principled and impartial manner.

Azerbaijan supports efforts to reform the existing humanitarian response system. We share the view that predictable humanitarian funding is one of the key elements of the reform package. In this context, the idea of upgrading the current Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF) through the addition of a grant element is of particular importance for ensuring timely and effective response both in cases of newly emerging crises and in under-funded and protracted crises.

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With regard to the latter, it is worth mentioning that even the overall increase in global humanitarian funding has not ensured an equitable humanitarian response in all parts of the globe, and funding continues to be concentrated on high-profile crises that enjoy significant political and media attention. Therefore, the idea of allocating one third of the upgraded CERF's grant facilities for under-funded emergencies is commendable. We believe, however, that clear and objective eligibility criteria based on needs assessment must be elaborated in order to ensure the equitable and balanced funding of such emergencies. The disbursement of the Fund should take into account the existing imbalance in spending among regions, as well as among sectors.

As far as humanitarian coordination is concerned, the effective coordination of the humanitarian response at the field level is of paramount importance. In our view, close cooperation and effective coordination among all stakeholders is crucial for ensuring the efficiency of the United Nations system-wide capacity and of short- and medium-term relief efforts. In this regard, strengthening support for, and the capacities of, the resident humanitarian coordinators and United Nations country teams is critical.

It is clear that national ownership in the design, implementation and coordination of programmes in both post-disaster and post-conflict situations is essential in order to ensure the desired impact of those programmes and their sustainability. However, efficient burden-sharing between national authorities and international humanitarian and development actors is needed, in particular in protracted humanitarian situations with mass displacement and limited national capacities to tackle all existing problems.

Better coordination by the United Nations of international efforts on the ground is needed in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and to increase the efficiency of activities overall in situations such as those to which I have referred. Humanitarian assistance and funding should not be limited to providing immediate response to crises, but should also take into account long-term needs in the transition phase. Capacity gaps in the United Nations coordination mechanisms in the transition phase must be adequately addressed so as to ensure an efficient response to transition needs.

Furthermore, the effective planning of activities in post-disaster and post-conflict transitions must be improved. Regular monitoring and assessment of needs could contribute to the consistent planning of the work of various stakeholders.

We note with concern the situation with regard to internally displaced persons, the number of whom has increased all over the world. Despite a considerable international response, an alarmingly high number of internally displaced persons do not receive sufficient protection and assistance. There is a strong need for concerted action by the international community. There is no doubt that protecting and assisting internally displaced persons is particularly important in stabilizing affected countries, restoring economic and social life and paving the way for development.

The situation of internally displaced persons is an area with regard to which United Nations agencies must strengthen their cooperation and revitalize their collaborative actions in order to address the existing gaps in the international response to the issue. United Nations entities should employ mechanisms that establish a comprehensive and clear division of responsibilities for system-wide action. In this regard, we welcome the fact that the United Nations system has begun to pay due attention to the problem of internal displacement by reflecting on the matter of further strengthening the inter-agency response to the needs and protection-associated challenges of internally displaced persons.

I would like now to turn to sub-item (c) of agenda item 73, "Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster". Azerbaijan attaches great importance to these deliberations. We commend the Secretary-General for his report contained in document A/60/443 and express our appreciation to the Governments of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine for their valuable input. The report provides a useful overview of the current situation and an impact analysis of activities for the long-term development of the Chernobyl-affected areas.

In the year leading up to the twentieth anniversary, the observation that the region has not recovered the livelihoods that were lost and that the ramifications of the disaster still represent a serious challenge to the economic, social and environmental

development of the most-affected countries causes particular concern. Clearly, the maturity of the problem makes it imperative that we reinforce international efforts to overcome the consequences, but on no account should it be viewed as an old or forgotten problem.

Efficient post-disaster recovery and development require the targeted assistance of the international community and synergy among the stakeholders. Thus, we note with satisfaction that the comprehensive framework actions put in place in the most affected countries have been complemented and coordinated at both governmental and system-wide levels.

We welcome the positive change in the system-wide response for Chernobyl recovery efforts, and we look forward to the further coherent and effective engagement of the organizations of the United Nations system, bearing in mind their mandates and comparative advantages. Azerbaijan also values the role of the United Nations Development Group in coordinating these efforts and further maintaining the shift to a long-term development approach.

We also hail the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency, both as the lead organizer of the Chernobyl Forum and as a purveyor of technical cooperation programmes for reducing the radiological impact of the accident and addressing its human dimension.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the fact that Azerbaijan believes that the current review will give new impetus to reinforcing international cooperation in the areas of economic development and scientific research on the environmental and health consequences of the disaster, and will increase the efficiency of preparations for the commemorative year 2006.

Azerbaijan, as a sponsor of the important draft resolutions before us under this agenda item — A/60/L.18, L.19 and L.20 — expresses its hope that through their implementation, we will succeed in addressing our concerns with regard to the strengthening of mechanisms to prevent, mitigate and respond to humanitarian emergencies worldwide.

**Mr. Oosthuizen** (South Africa): I should like first of all to align my delegation with the statements made by the Ambassador of Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the Permanent Representative of Malawi on behalf of the Southern African Development Community, as well as to thank the Secretary-General for his reports prepared under this item.

The past year was indeed very challenging for the humanitarian community. We were faced with many hurricanes, floods and earthquakes all over the world. We remember in particular the recent devastating earthquake in Pakistan, emphasizing the point made by the Secretary-General in his report (*A/60/432*) that the need for effective humanitarian assistance has increased dramatically.

In his earlier report, "In larger freedom", (*A/59/2005*) the Secretary-General recognized that the humanitarian system has generally worked well in most emergencies, given the means at its disposal. That would imply, at least to us, that the United Nations system has tried its best, given the limited resources it has received. Let me provide some examples of what I understand is meant by the phrase, "the means at its disposal", particularly having the African continent in mind.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) highlighted, for example, during its United Nations Humanitarian Appeal 2005, that funding obtained amounted to only 36 per cent of overall requirements, if the Indian Ocean Flash Appeal, launched at the beginning of the year to address the effects of the tsunami disaster, is excluded.

More troubling for the African continent was the sober analysis that the Djibouti Drought Flash Appeal attracted only 5 per cent of the required $7.5 million and the Benin Flash Appeal only 9 per cent of the required $4.6 million. As recently as the first week of September 2005, the World Food Programme expressed concern that it might not obtain enough funding to address the food shortage in Mozambique, which only required $19 million to avert the crisis.

We are now receiving reports of the severe impact of the drought in Malawi, which would also necessitate further consideration for assistance. What is particularly troubling about the African example is that even when appeals are made in advance to address crises, they still do not get the desired response. The further tragedy of this is that a rapid response to these crises could have mitigated the effects of the disasters.

It is therefore obvious that we need to rethink the way we provide funding to address international humanitarian responses, not only with regard to the amount of funding, but also the unequal way in which funding is being distributed. The recently adopted outcome document (*resolution 60/1*) clearly indicated our consensus agreement that the effectiveness of the humanitarian response system could in part be enhanced by improving the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF).

In the interest of time, allow me to make a few specific comments on the proposals in the Secretary-General's report before us. We support the modernization of the current CERF so that it can respond rapidly to emergencies, particularly forgotten or underfunded emergencies, many of which are in Africa.

Our support for timely response to identified needs is based on real experiences in Africa. One recent example is the locust crisis in the Sahel. Although the initial requests for support were modest in dollar terms, immediate action could have prevented the hunger and starvation that followed the scourge of locusts. The lack of an effective and immediate response often leads to the so-called forgotten or neglected emergencies, which, as I have already indicated, are often in Africa. The proposal by the Secretary-General to attend to those neglected emergencies, through the new Central Emergency Response Fund, is therefore strongly supported.

We recognize the value of upgrading the CERF and providing it more financial support, especially through the addition of a grant facility. We would also support operationalizing the Fund as soon as possible, reminding ourselves that humanitarian response is indeed supposed to be immediate in order to address the most basic humanitarian needs of affected communities. However, in line with the appeal made by the Secretary-General, we would request that donors, in announcing their support for the new CERF, emphasize that that support would be additional funding; it should not be funds redirected from other development budgets.

It is obvious that we need to further support capacity-building within OCHA if we want to strengthen the humanitarian response of the United Nations system. We would also like to see the further development of the Financial Tracking System to better reflect and monitor humanitarian financing. That would provide Member States with a better understanding of what has been promised and what has been delivered.

We recognize that addressing and improving the response of the international community to humanitarian crises is not simply a matter of financing alone. We also need to look at issues such as leadership and response capacity, and at how to effectively identify and respond to needs. Of particular importance is improving and strengthening the leadership and performance of the resident coordinators and/or the humanitarian coordinators. We also need to be clear about the role envisaged for the United Nations operational agencies and the issue of governance and accountability within the United Nations system, as well as better coordination, not only within the United Nations system but also between that system and non-governmental organizations.

We need to ensure that the guiding principles for humanitarian assistance are adhered to, particularly the notion that humanitarian assistance should be provided in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality. However, it is my opinion that the proposals on the table to improve the CERF are a step in the right direction, and we need to seriously engage in that debate. We would also like to see the humanitarian community continue to draw on the national expertise of countries in order to increase their rapid-response capacity.

We have noticed with appreciation that in the past the Secretary-General has recognized the role that regional organizations, particularly the African Union, could and should play in addressing humanitarian crises in the context of improved partnerships.

My delegation remains ready to participate actively in the debate in the coming days to further discuss the ways and means to strengthen humanitarian coordination and response capacity, for we realize that many issues are complicated and would need detailed attention. My delegation would also like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Jan Egeland, and his team for the proposals made and for maintaining a focus on the need to improve humanitarian assistance to affected communities, many of which are in developing countries.

Finally, I would like to express my Government's sincere appreciation to all humanitarian personnel,

working often under very difficult situations to help people in need.

**Mr. Holosha** (Ukraine) (*spoke in Russian*): The delegation of the Ukraine aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of the United Kingdom on behalf of the European Union on the issue of strengthening the coordination of humanitarian assistance.

We would like to devote our statement to sub-item (c) of agenda item 73, "Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster".

First, allow me to express our sincere condolences and support to the Governments and people of countries that have suffered natural and humanitarian disasters this year. Such tragedies always find a response in the hearts of my compatriots, because, almost 20 years ago in Ukraine, at the fourth plant of the Chernobyl nuclear power station, there was a technological catastrophe, enormous both in its scale and its consequences. That national tragedy doomed millions of people to suffering, altered the environment and even affected people psychologically.

The accident showed how vulnerable States are when faced with global technological catastrophes in peacetime. More than 10 per cent of our country's territory was exposed to radioactive contamination. Some 160,000 people from 170 towns had to leave their homes forever and move to other areas. A total of 3.5 million people in Ukraine suffered from the catastrophe and its consequences, particularly those in rural areas.

The lack of specialized knowledge about radioactivity prevented people from evaluating for themselves the truth of information provided by the press and the electronic mass media. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the worsening environmental situation led to a situation in which the accident at the nuclear power plant constituted a catastrophe for millions of people living in contaminated areas. In an instant, hundreds of thousands of ordinary citizens became the victims of the consequences of Chernobyl. Fate and history have dictated that our nation, Ukraine, must pay bills which it never signed for and atone for sins that it did not commit. We have to deploy major material and financial resources to call for the affected people, deal with the consequences of the catastrophe in the evacuated areas and rehabilitate the environment.

Over the last 15 years, during which Ukraine, on its own, has been covering the costs of responding to the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, the expenditures, representing from five to 10 per cent of our national budget, have not been decreasing. The expenses associated with dealing with the consequences of the disaster over those years represent about $8 billion. Overall, the economic losses associated with the Chernobyl accident represent some $180 billion. This is nine times the national budget of Ukraine for the year 2005.

It should be said that for Ukraine dealing with the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster has differed significantly from the experience of other affected countries. This is due to the fact that the Chernobyl plant is located in Ukraine, as is the so-called "shelter" facility, which for 19 years has served as a protective system covering the epicentre of the disaster.

In 1994, the international community, in the form of the leaders of the Group of Eight (G-8) and the European Union, presented the Government of Ukraine with a proposal to shut down the Chernobyl nuclear power plant ahead of schedule. In 1995, a memorandum of understanding was signed in which Ukraine undertook to close the plant early. In the memorandum, the parties recognized that the complete closure of the Chernobyl power station would have negative economic consequences for Ukraine. Though it meant sacrificing its national interest to some degree, Ukraine met its international obligations, and in 2000 the plant was closed down, although we were not prepared for this, either technologically or financially. There was no project for decommissioning the Chernobyl plant, although by law such a project should have been approved five years in advance of the plant closure. Financial support for decommissioning was also lacking. Because of this, and according to the joint plan of action between Ukraine and the G-8, it was proposed that closure of the Chernobyl power station be supported through grants that would enable Ukraine to implement a number of international plans aimed at increasing safety.

Currently at the Chernobyl industrial site four major projects are being implemented. They differ as to size, projected completion dates and funding sources. In addition to Ukraine, the donors for this

project include, more or less, all of the world's developed countries. However, and this cannot but be a source of some alarm, there have been delays in implementing these projects, ranging from one to six years. The longest delay has occurred in a project that is central to the decommissioning of the Chernobyl nuclear plant, namely, the construction of a second depleted nuclear fuel storage facility.

Unfortunately, due to circumstances beyond Ukraine's control, work on this project has ground to a halt. As a consequence, five years after the plant has been decommissioned, fuel remains in the reactors. We now need to take decisions to offload the spent fuel into temporary storage plants that will not be serviceable for much longer. And another important point: the most important international project referred to in the memorandum between Ukraine and the G-7, that of converting the shelter system into an environmentally safe system, is also several years behind schedule. To ensure the successful implementation of these international projects, we need additional joint resources from donor countries to finance this project, as well as contractors to complete this project.

The Chernobyl disaster altered people's lives in social, economic and medical terms, and also had an impact on their inner lives. The problems that it engendered have not disappeared with the passage of years, but are assuming different forms. Some of these, particularly the social and economic effects, are worsening. Therefore, Ukraine believes that there needs to be an integrated solution to these problems and that there must be a systematic approach on the part of the executive branch in setting up socioeconomic and organizational conditions, as well as in providing guarantees of social services for the affected population and rehabilitating the contaminated areas.

While we hope for assistance in addressing these problems, Ukraine is itself doing everything it can to respond to the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. We have adopted many forward-looking decisions, the most important of which is a national programme to respond to the consequences of the disaster between now and 2010. This programme defines the priorities of the Government's policy to respond to the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster over the next five years. The main objectives include protecting the health of victims, particularly women and children, decommissioning the Chernobyl nuclear power station and converting the shelter into an environmentally safe system, strengthening and supporting radiation safety barriers and cutting back on the release of radionucleides into the area beyond the exclusion zone, social support to the people and economic rehabilitation of the contaminated areas.

On the basis of experience gained over many years and also pursuant to the recommendations of the Vienna Chernobyl Forum in 2005, the main target groups for medical supervision over the next 10 years will be those who took part in disaster response, people who were exposed to significant doses of iodine radiation as children and victims who have remained in areas contaminated with radionucleides. The social support policy gives particular attention to implementing State programmes to rehabilitate the contaminated area and to making sure that they are made clean and attract investment, as well as to developing infrastructure and creating jobs in places where victims make up a large proportion of the population.

We are pleased to note that the key principles in the rehabilitation strategy prepared by the United Nations are in line with the above-mentioned priorities of the Government of Ukraine. And here, we hope that there will be greater cooperation with the United Nations structures and with donor countries in implementing projects, such as improved delivery of primary health care services and improved medical aid, particularly for women and children, carrying out projects to ensure social and economic rehabilitation of the affected areas, transitioning these areas into a phase of social and economic development, completing the international projects for decommissioning the Chernobyl power plant, and transforming the shelter system into an environmentally safe system.

Thanks to the joint efforts of Ukraine and the international community, in particular, the United Nations, we have been able to deal with many critical problems associated with the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. However, many problems remain. And here it would be appropriate to refer to the words of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who said, "Chernobyl is a word we would all like to erase from our memory ... more than 7 million of our fellow human beings do not have the luxury of forgetting. They are still suffering, every day, as a result of what happened."

As the country and people who have suffered most from the Chernobyl disaster and its long-term consequences, we are entitled to count on the support of the international community. This support should come both in the form of international assistance programmes, which are vital, and in the form of simple human understanding and compassion for our problems.

The 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster falls on 26 April 2006, and in connection with this tragic event, from 24 to 26 April 2006, in Kyiv, we will hold an international conference entitled "Twenty Years After the Chernobyl Disaster: Future Outlook." The conference will sum up what has already been done, draw up a programme of action, both for the international community and for national organizations engaged in responding to the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, and assess the impact of the catastrophe on the nuclear power industry as a whole. We invite Member States as well as all interested partners to take part in the conference. We also feel compelled to ask the President of the General Assembly to convene in late April and early May of 2006 a special meeting of the General Assembly devoted to this tragic anniversary. We believe this will provide additional momentum for the adoption of effective measures to step up collaboration in the international community to continue responding to the after-effects of the Chernobyl catastrophe.

The delegation of Ukraine, as a sponsor of the draft resolution on Chernobyl at this session of the General Assembly, attaches particular importance to its being adopted by consensus. We are convinced that this document will serve to increase international cooperation on Chernobyl issues.

**Mr. Kariyawasam** (Sri Lanka): Sri Lanka associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 on all sub-items under agenda item 73.

It is an unfortunate reality that within just one year two natural disasters of unprecedented magnitude struck the region of South Asia. One hit from land; the other came from the sea. On 26 December 2004, tidal waves struck two thirds of Sri Lanka's coastal areas, leaving in their wake death and destruction of a scale hitherto unknown in our 2,500-year recorded history. Friendly Governments, the United Nations, international organizations, civil society and countless well-wishers across the world reached out beyond the confines of geopolitical and other man-made barriers to help. This boundless generosity rekindled in us a new confidence in the power of people acting in unison for the welfare of humankind. To all those who sympathized with us and assisted in rescue and relief operations, the people of Sri Lanka are profoundly grateful.

Let me also take this opportunity to extend a special word of thanks to President Clinton, the United Nations Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, for his commitment and leadership in coordinating the ongoing international effort for our sustainable recovery from the tsunami disaster.

In the aftermath of the tsunami disaster, there was no strong institutional framework to coordinate the relief effort, owing to the lack of credible local disaster management and mitigation procedures. However, the latent capacities of the existing district administration and local civil society structures came to the fore. Even with inadequate capacity and lack of experience, they responded magnificently. The fact that there were no deaths in Sri Lanka from starvation or ill health as a result of the disaster is a credit to the immediate local input.

It has become evident that building local capacity and ownership are essential for the success of long-term rehabilitation and reconstruction. This requires a partnership with the locality and an understanding of specific local conditions, as well as projects that will be ultimately be owned by the people in the affected areas. In this context, Sri Lanka has now developed a blueprint for reconstruction, in cooperation and consultation with the United Nations system, the international donor community and numerous civil society organizations. Most importantly, given the importance of multi-stakeholder participation for sustainable recovery, this blueprint reflects the general will of the people in each affected locality as well. System-wide consultations take place on a continual basis that provide the scope and opportunity for beneficiary inputs to the reconstruction programme.

Natural disasters create huge setbacks, thus negating development gains for developing countries. As we approach the first anniversary of the tsunami disaster, Sri Lanka is engaged in an inevitably long and complex reconstruction process. It has been estimated that $1.8 billion will be required for reconstruction.

The Government of Sri Lanka is committed to building back better. We are pleased that Sri Lanka's economy is projected to resume its growth this year, as the infrastructure damaged by the tsunami is being rebuilt, and the fisheries and tourism sectors of the economy are beginning to recover. We are also on course to meet the construction target of 80 per cent of the 80,000 houses that had been destroyed.

Since the initial stages of the recovery effort, Sri Lanka has been committed to effective management of the recovery effort, as well as to transparency and accountability in the disbursement of funds. In this connection, the United Nations has worked with us to create a development assistance database system, which enables the Government to coordinate reconstruction efforts more effectively and identify gaps in the process. It also enables the public to view financial data and track progress in the activities of donors and implementing partners. In our view, this is a model worthy of emulation in similar situations.

Natural disasters can strike anywhere, as we have witnessed in the recent past. Unfortunately, it is apparent that the rate of survival and the ability to rebuild depends on the relative wealth of the affected country. Therefore, there are several important steps that our development partners can take to help developing countries affected by disasters to attain sustainable recovery.

Given that many developing countries have opened up their economies on the basis that more trade, not aid, will engender economic development, trade barriers that exist in various forms in our export markets can be a drag on our recovery and growth. Therefore, market access for our exports, preferably under concessionary terms, at least for a specific period, would accelerate the recovery process. Moreover, excessive debt burdens continue to be a great hindrance to our recovery potential, especially in the light of escalating oil prices and the depression in commodity prices. To give an example, before the tsunami disaster Sri Lanka had set aside $500 million for servicing debt for the year, an amount we can ill afford now in the face of massive reconstruction expenditure. We are grateful to several countries for cancelling some of our debt and for offers of moratoriums on repayment of debts. However, we do need for such humanitarian gestures to continue until the recovery is completed.

The experiences of the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster, of hurricanes that struck the Caribbean, Hurricane Katrina, landslides in Guatemala and Mexico, as well as the South Asian earthquake just last month, make apparent the need to develop effective and efficient disaster management and risk reduction at the regional and global levels. This week the leaders of South Asia underscored this fact at their summit meeting in Bangladesh. In this respect, initiatives for setting up global early warning systems, incorporating regional, subregional and national systems, should receive higher priority. Hence, we seek the support of all concerned parties to establish the proposed Indian Ocean tsunami early warning system by January 2006, as scheduled.

The recent increase in natural disasters has also met with the unfortunate situation of uneven funding patterns and donor interest. This glaring disparity in resource availability for each disaster may be a result of several factors, including donor fatigue. Nevertheless, it is the responsibility of each Member State of the United Nations to empower this Organization in such a manner as to even out those odds to the extent possible in view of our common humanitarian concerns. This will, no doubt, enable the United Nations system to mobilize on short notice. Whenever a natural disaster occurs, anywhere in the world, the United Nations should not be made to wait for funds in order to commence work immediately. In this context, Sri Lanka supports the proposal to upgrade the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), which is expected to be operational by January 2006, with a renewed funding base. However, for the Fund to succeed over the long term, it is essential to have standing pledges for its replenishment. Moreover, the involvement of both traditional and non-traditional donors, as well as the experience of countries affected by natural disaster, in the governance of the Fund will play an important role in its success.

We profoundly appreciate the way in which the United Nations system marshalled its energy and resources to alleviate the misery of those affected by the tsunami disaster. In that regard, we emphasize once again the important role of the United Nations in coordinating humanitarian relief assistance throughout the world for all natural disasters.

Having recently faced such a natural disaster, we note some important factors that, in our view, make the delivery of assistance cost-effective and efficient.

First, duplication must be avoided, both within the United Nations system and with regard to assistance from civil society and non-governmental organizations. It would be best if the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs would work with national Governments and all other donors and stakeholders to that end.

Secondly, we must promote substantive and substantial national and local involvement in all relief, recovery and reconstruction efforts. Such efforts must encompass not only national Government authorities but also national civil society organizations.

Thirdly, locally available resources, in particular human resources, must be utilized. That substantially decreases the overhead costs usually associated with United Nations operations and international donor programmes. Furthermore, the use of local raw materials and local processing can be cost-effective and engender sustainable development.

Fourthly, transparency should be promoted in action taken at the international level and, more importantly, at the local level. That necessarily includes disclosure as to financial outlays and how donor funds have been utilized at the local level.

Given the current rapid advancements in technology and human capabilities and the exponential accumulation of wealth in some parts of the world, it is unconscionable to let less fortunate fellow human beings suffer through neglect and apathy. The rapid globalization of both economic and social forces can no longer bear such iniquity. It is in our enlightened self-interest to work in partnership to provide rescue and relief to all human beings, wherever they live and whenever such needs arise. We need to continue to learn from every disaster how we can improve our methods of delivery and mobilize the conscience of humanity for the noble goal of helping one another. To that end, the Organization has a unique role to fulfil. And we, as Member States, must empower the Organization with appropriate means and resources. We cannot fail.

**Mrs. Asmady** (Indonesia): The Indonesian delegation would like to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his reports on humanitarian assistance, which have made clear the urgent need for change in the approach for dealing with disasters and complex emergencies. We once again express our deep appreciation to Mr. Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, and his team for their commitment to their role of coordinating the efforts of the United Nations system, and in particular for their contributions during the emergency relief phase in countries affected by the December 2004 tsunami.

In making its contribution to the discussion on the subject, Indonesia aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and with the statement made by the representative of Malaysia on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Because of ongoing conflicts and natural disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes and severe weather patterns that cause extensive damage for vulnerable populations in various parts of the world, the demand for humanitarian assistance continues to escalate. The situation is compounded by the increase of worldwide epidemics such as the avian flu.

Indonesia shares the view that the United Nations must take steps to strengthen its current system, tools and competencies in order to effectively address current and future humanitarian needs. The United Nations needs increased resources and better coordination of its efforts, so that its response time to future disasters is shortened by making the necessary funding and appropriately trained personnel readily available.

As part of that change and in order to ensure better coordination and avoid the duplication of programmes on the ground, it is essential to strengthen the role of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme and other relevant bodies that intervene in the humanitarian emergency phase and are involved in follow-up rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts. There must also be constant awareness that there are humanitarian needs that extend well beyond the post-conflict recovery and reconstruction phase and which early humanitarian arrangements do not cover. In general, early transition activities tend to focus on stabilizing and re-establishing basic State infrastructure before full needs assessments can be completed.

Along with those changes aimed at responding to the full range of real needs on the ground, action must be taken to address the persistent financial constraints that affect humanitarian work. My delegation therefore fully supports the recommendation of the Secretary-General to convert the Central Emergency Revolving Fund into an emergency response fund with a grant facility. That would ensure immediate funding to support rapid responses to humanitarian crises. We must give that proposal urgent consideration.

Indonesia also welcomes the commitment of world leaders at last September's summit to address the aforementioned challenges in humanitarian assistance, in particular to strengthen the capacities of developing countries to respond rapidly to natural disasters and mitigate their impact. It is to the credit of our leaders that they took the decision to further develop and improve mechanisms that equip developing countries with emergency standby capacities.

With respect to the specific case of those developing countries affected by the December 2004 tsunami, Indonesia notes that President William Jefferson Clinton has been appointed to sustain the political will of the international community to support long-term rehabilitation, reconstruction and risk reduction in countries impacted by the tsunami. Similar initiatives should be taken in the future when unprecedented global catastrophes occur.

Being one of the countries that suffered the wrath of the December 2004 tsunami in the worst possible way, Indonesia remains deeply grateful for the generous contributions and the solidarity extended by the international community. For its part, Indonesia has undertaken, and will persist in, its efforts to ensure that such contributions are managed in a fully transparent and accountable fashion.

To that end, Indonesia has adopted a master plan for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Aceh and Nias Island. The plan provides a holistic, comprehensive and integrated approach to a five-year restoration and reconstruction programme for the worst-hit regions. The plan provides guidelines for: creating understanding and building commitment among all stakeholders; coordinating, synchronizing and integrating the plans of various sectors; disseminating and distributing data and information to the local, national and international communities; promoting the solidarity, participation and involvement of civil society; and designing a system and mechanism for the mobilization of funds.

The fruit of the plan was the establishment on 29 April 2005 of the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency. Its main mission is to restore livelihoods and strengthen communities in Aceh and Nias by designing and overseeing a coordinated, community-driven reconstruction and development programme, implemented in accordance with the highest professional standards.

Although progress is under way, my delegation has come to appreciate how certain aspects of this process can affect the pace of the implementation of the overall programme. Coordination is one such aspect. It must be implemented to guarantee that all affected communities are properly assisted, in accordance with their specified needs and priorities, by agencies in the field. If that is to be done successfully, community leadership must be consulted and must form part of the recovery effort planning process. However, because various agencies have widely divergent approaches, standards and speeds of operation, recovery work can be slowed by serious disorganization.

Another important aspect of implementation is community participation. The fact that that entails painstaking consultations with community leaders to determine what must be done and how to prioritize projects so that efforts can be properly sequenced has created the false impression of slow progress. Once consultations have been completed, however, it is expected that the actual rehabilitation and reconstruction work will be carried out with speed and efficiency.

The value of this participatory approach also brings home the fact that it is critically important that vulnerable countries develop regional and national capacities to anticipate major natural disasters by using early warning systems and to mobilize domestic resources to lessen the humanitarian impact. Since national resources are available when disasters strike, they represent the first line of defence against a rapid deterioration of the situation in an affected community.

In addition, such resources constitute a vital aspect of a disaster-prone country's preparedness and its ability to help itself. Appropriate training must therefore be provided to potential first responders, including civilian, military and other security forces

that can act to prevent an unfortunate situation from becoming tragic.

With regard to the situation in Aceh, the Government of Indonesia has developed the Recovery Aceh Nias (RAN) database — which is based on the Development Assistance Database of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) — to monitor and evaluate work being carried out in the province. The RAN database provides official information for project reporting and tracking, covering all organizations involved in the recovery process and how they are responding to identified community needs.

Finally, I should like to touch upon the issue of international assistance to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people. Indonesia appreciates the Secretary-General's report on that subject (*A/60/90*) and fully endorses the view that only a peace process and a full and definitive settlement of the conflict will permit a transition from crisis management and recovery to sustainable development and prosperity. We urge that the Palestinian people be allowed to exercise their right to self-determination, including by establishing their own State.

Indonesia, as a country affected by the tsunami in December 2004, also appreciates the practical value of the various recommendations put forward by the Secretary-General in his other reports. However, it is not enough for sound recommendations to be made; they must inspire a rapid response on the part of the international community.

**Ms. Juul** (Norway): As we meet here in New York, some 300,000 Pakistanis are facing the coming winter in Kashmir without the necessary shelter and assistance. At the same time, an estimated 10 million people are facing drought and severe food shortages in Southern Africa. In both cases, the response from donors to United Nations appeals has been slow. We must face the fact that we have failed.

We believe that those two humanitarian crises could have been handled differently — and more effectively — if the United Nations and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) had been equipped with the tools necessary for dealing with the fierce forces of nature or of man.

The role of the United Nations in emergency humanitarian assistance is increasingly important, because its services are in great demand. Strengthening the coordination of United Nations humanitarian assistance is required, because we have an obligation to supply help to those in need.

Providing the United Nations with the necessary resources is essential, because we want it to be a strong coordinator. Norway therefore welcomes the upgrading of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF), which will make it a permanent emergency fund that can quickly respond to — and possibly prevent — crises like the one in Southern Africa. We are anxious to see an upgraded CERF operational as early as possible in 2006.

*Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

In keeping with the United Nations humanitarian reform agenda, the Fund's main purpose is to improve international response capacity. That means improving the speed, equity and predictability of humanitarian responses on the ground. Indeed, that is required. Increasingly, the United Nations and the donor community are faced with demands for quick and flexible responses to sudden-impact, complex emergencies. Furthermore, an upgraded CERF is necessary to ensure a better and more systematic focus on neglected emergencies. It will provide funding that will allow agencies to respond to appeals that donors collectively have not yet been able to fund to the extent needed.

A new CERF is not a goal in itself. For Norway, the key criterion for the success of humanitarian reform is that it more effectively meet humanitarian needs on the ground. The Fund is an important step towards that goal, and we intend to cooperate closely with OCHA, with other relevant United Nations agencies and with Member States to ensure that CERF becomes a successful financial mechanism.

But we will not be able to provide flexible and speedy funding unless certain conditions are met. There must be an unbureaucratic and flexible advisory group structure. There must be clear criteria for the allocation of resources. There must be strong leadership and a high degree of consensus — both between the United Nations and donors and between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) — regarding how those criteria are to be applied in practice. There must be accurate needs assessments and appropriate accounting and

reporting mechanisms. We would also like to see better and more systematic dialogue with NGOs on how we can improve our response capacity.

Good humanitarian donorship requires that humanitarian financing be adequate, flexible and predictable. The new CERF will provide an opportunity for us to encourage higher levels of donor funding and to demonstrate in practice the true value of our humanitarian principles. Our goal — our mandate — is improved humanitarian response, not financial redistribution.

The time has come to have done with the perpetual underfunding of standby and preparedness mechanisms. Therefore, the Norwegian Government has pledged 200 million Norwegian kroner — approximately $30 million — to the Fund. Those are additional funds. We urge other donors to contribute similar amounts.

**Mr. Briz Gutiérrez** (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Guatemala associates itself fully with the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

We wish to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive reports on this subject. We shall comment first on international cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters and secondly on the improvement of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF).

There can be no question that humanitarian issues are of fundamental importance in the context of emergencies. However, our debates and shared experiences have demonstrated that risk reduction and preventive action with respect to vulnerable persons are the best way to contribute to reducing the impact of disasters.

For that reason, Guatemala concurs with the Secretary-General's recommendation that the relevant United Nations organizations and donor Governments should strengthen the capacities of disaster-prone countries in disaster mitigation, preparedness and response as well as post-disaster recovery, within a disaster-risk-reduction framework.

Coping with such problems requires a global response — hence the importance of strengthening cooperation with and technical assistance to Governments, so that concrete actions may be taken in the area of the prevention and mitigation of disasters.

Recent storms and hurricanes, such as Stan, Wilma and Beta, have, regrettably, confirmed Central America's vulnerability to natural disasters. It is a well-known fact that during the June-November period the region is prone to hurricanes, storms, floods and mudslides; that from November to June it can suffer droughts and forest fires; and that during any one-year period beginning in June, it can be hit by volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and tidal waves.

Guatemala, by reason of its geographic position and geological characteristics, is a country of multiple and varied landscapes as well as climates — a country that is highly vulnerable and exposed to various types of disasters.

We have learned in the hardest possible way that a disaster, in addition to its devastating effects on human security and sustainable development, also can pose serious threats to the social fabric. Last month's catastrophic mudslides, brought about by the torrential rain caused by hurricane Stan, not only inflicted serious damage on Guatemala's infrastructure but also resulted in the deaths of a large number of people in predominantly indigenous communities, which was highly detrimental to the social fabric of the country.

Concerning the recommendation calling for enhancing the role played by regional organizations, we concur as to the need to strengthen regional cooperation, which has enabled us to achieve a higher level of coordination in coping with disasters. That is why Guatemala firmly supports the efforts being made by the region in the context of the Central American Integration System. We are cooperating with the other countries of the region in that context as part of our efforts to support the work being done by the Coordination Centre for Natural Disaster Prevention in Central America.

Turning now to the enhancement of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF), Guatemala agrees that there is a need to modernize it and welcomes the proposal to that effect contained in the Secretary-General's report. We understand that upgrading the present Fund would entail not just a reform of the overall United Nations system for responding to humanitarian crises but the creation of a more efficient rapid-reaction mechanism endowed with predictable funding available to all in an equitable manner.

My delegation supports the modernization of the Fund and in particular improving humanitarian

response in under-funded crisis situations. We believe that this is the best way to make sure that cases of "unnoticed" emergencies receive the attention they deserve. My delegation considers that all natural disasters are of equal importance and that they should not be ranked according to the number of deaths, the magnitude of the destruction or the scope of international media coverage. The Indian Ocean tsunami disaster clearly demonstrated that extraordinary amounts of financing can be mustered provided the necessary political will and commitments exist.

In that respect, we wish to express our concern at the criteria and guidelines that are to be used in the operation of the new Fund, particularly as regards the role that the proposed advisory group will have in the allocation of funds. It is certainly normal procedure for funds to have bodies or committees responsible for deciding whether or not to grant financial assistance. We consider, however, that this is not the most appropriate arrangement in the case of emergencies, where response time is of the essence. For the moment, my delegation is looking into the matter, but we wish to point out that any process by which the group is selected must be based, as a minimum, on adequate and equitable geographical distribution.

Our actions take place in the framework established by resolution 46/182, particularly the principles of neutrality, impartiality and humanity, with regard to humanitarian assistance.

Guatemala deems it essential that the cultural specificities of countries be taken into account. The population of Guatemala comprises a considerable proportion of indigenous peoples, whose community tradition is a fundamental contributing factor both to the successful management of a system of humanitarian crisis relief as well as to the success of subsequent post-disaster recovery operations.

The aim of modernizing the Fund is to save lives, but we cannot overlook the issue of post-disaster recovery. As the Secretary-General quite rightly points out, gaps exist in the capacities of United Nations mechanisms to support post-disaster recovery. Guatemala supports the efforts of the United Nations to establish an international recovery platform to bridge such gaps.

We are grateful for the efforts made to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian disaster-relief assistance provided by the United Nations and by all those countries that are part of the never-ending struggle to mitigate the consequences of disasters. In that respect, we appreciate the endeavours of the Under-Secretary-General and of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

In closing, I should like to express my delegation's gratitude to the international community for its show of solidarity in the wake of the devastation caused by Hurricane Stan. I wish also to thank Member States for their support for the draft resolution submitted by my delegation on humanitarian and post-recovery assistance for El Salvador and Guatemala, which was adopted by consensus by the Second Committee last Friday.

**Mr. Kazykhanov** (Kazakhstan) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, I should like to thank the Secretary-General for having prepared and submitted reports on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations. The documents contain a comprehensive assessment of the regions that are suffering from the consequences of natural disasters and of the work being done by Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations to provide assistance and to bring life back to normal in those areas.

The reports contain concrete recommendations on enhancing and coordinating the joint efforts under way and also on providing assistance to mitigate the consequences of natural and manmade disasters.

The past year has been an extremely difficult one in terms of the number of natural disasters that have affected many States, as a result of which hundreds of thousands of people have died. Millions of people have been left homeless, without any means of survival. The destructive impact of the tsunami in the Indian Ocean, the earthquake in Pakistan and India, the flooding in South Asia and the hurricanes in the United States and Latin America, as well as the mudslides and snowstorms in Central Asia and other natural disasters, have placed a heavy burden on the Governments and the peoples of the affected countries. We are firmly convinced that the international community cannot remain indifferent to such tragedies, which can strike anyone, anywhere. We believe that it is only by pooling its efforts that the international community can mitigate the effects of natural disasters.

We need to build upon initiatives, as soon as possible, to create a permanent early warning system for natural disasters. Of critical importance here for the countries and regions affected by natural disasters is the timely provision of assistance.

Based on our belief in common humanitarian values and principles, the Republic of Kazakhstan has provided as much assistance as possible to victims of the Indian Ocean tsunami and of the earthquake in Pakistan. We believe that by meeting our obligations to provide assistance, first of all by donor countries, and enhancing coordination and support by countries and international organizations, it will help overcome the consequences of natural disasters and save the lives of thousands of people in the affected regions.

As the Secretary-General points out in his report on optimizing the international effort to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster (*A/60/443*), 19 years after the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, hundreds of thousands of people in Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine are still suffering the consequences, one of which has been an increase in the incidence of cancer.

We have not been able to rehabilitate the means of survival for people in the affected regions whose lives were destroyed by this disaster. Here I would like to point out that radiological disasters, unlike other disasters, spread beyond the crisis area itself, and overcoming the consequences takes decades.

In the years since the disaster occurred, major work has been done by Belarus, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, the Governments of many other countries, international organizations and non-governmental organizations to mitigate the consequences of that accident, which affected the people and environment in the region. Kazakhstan welcomes the work carried out by United Nations agencies aimed at supporting a new rehabilitation strategy for the affected regions. The practical steps the United Nations agencies and funds are taking in this area will indeed facilitate early rehabilitation for the people and environment of the region.

We highly appreciate the assistance given by donor countries in implementing various projects in the affected regions of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. I wish to mention the World Health Organization's Chernobyl Telemedicine Project; the UNICEF project on life skills and healthy lifestyle education in Chernobyl-affected areas; and the Swiss project to improve health care for mothers and children. These projects exemplify the search for new ways to rehabilitate and provide assistance to all those who have been affected by the Chernobyl accident.

The month of April 2006 will mark the twentieth anniversary of the catastrophe, one of the worst in history. We believe that that anniversary will be a major international event and will once again remind the international community of the unpredictable consequences of such types of accidents. It will also draw the attention of the international community to the needs of the people who have suffered from the accident and mobilize additional assistance to mitigate the consequences of the disaster.

We support the proposal contained in the report of the Secretary-General to organize a special commemorative meeting of the General Assembly devoted to the twentieth anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident, as well as the proposal to declare 26 April as a day to commemorate the victims of radiation accidents.

Kazakhstan also supports the adoption of the draft resolution (*A/60/L.19*), on Chernobyl, submitted to the current session of the General Assembly and is one of its sponsors.

**Mrs. Dashti** (Kuwait): We would like to associate ourselves with the statement made by the representative of Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. My delegation would like to focus its statement on agenda item 73 (a), on strengthening the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations.

Kuwait would like to express its deepest condolences and sympathy to the Governments and people that were victims of the natural disasters that have taken their toll on the livelihoods and economies of several countries in Southern Asia, the Caribbean and North America.

The rapid response of the international community, Governments, non-profit organizations, civil society and financial institutions in providing immediate humanitarian relief efforts reflects a spirit of international solidarity and cooperation. Kuwait was prompt to respond to such crises by offering financial assistance and humanitarian relief, earmarking $100 million for the victims of the tsunami disaster and

another $100 million for the victims of the latest earthquakes in Southern Asia.

Kuwait has entrusted the Kuwait National Red Crescent to coordinate with other international organizations and competent authorities in the affected countries with the delivery of such aid. Beyond that immediate relief, Kuwait will continue to address the issue of reconstruction and development. Indeed, Kuwait has entrusted the Kuwait Fund to follow up on the reconstruction aspect of its assistance programme.

The recent devastation caused by natural disasters should alert us all to the need for closer cooperation towards the establishment of an early warning system and the need for the coordination of efforts for the supply of aid and relief immediately after the impact of a natural disaster. The international community should focus as well on enhancing existing national and regional capacities to meet demands for rehabilitation and reconstruction.

We commend the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for its efforts in promoting and coordinating disaster response among the United Nations humanitarian agencies and donor countries. We support the continued effort by the international community to find the means to strengthen rapid response capacity in providing humanitarian relief. We would also like to recognize the significant role played by the national Red Cross and Red Crescent Society in disaster response.

In conclusion, we emphasize the need for the international community, including donor countries and financial institutions, to deliver promptly on their pledges to continue to provide the necessary funds and assistance to support reconstruction efforts.

**Ms. Singh** (Nepal): Nepal attaches great importance to the work of the United Nations towards strengthening humanitarian and disaster relief assistance to victims of natural and man-made disasters. My delegation expresses sincere thanks to the Secretary-General for his various reports providing comprehensive information on the humanitarian work of the United Nations.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. I would like to make some remarks on a couple of points that are of particular significance to my delegation.

We still have fresh memories of the massive loss of life and property that resulted from the Indian tsunami, the hurricanes in the Caribbean region and the earthquakes that occurred this year and in 2004. My delegation shares in the expressions of deep condolence and sympathy conveyed to all victims, their families and the peoples of Afghanistan, India and Pakistan, who suffered huge losses of life and property due to the massive earthquake that occurred in South Asia last month. We express our appreciation to the international community for its united response in providing humanitarian relief assistance to the victims of natural disasters. His Majesty's Government of Nepal was pleased to join others in making a modest contribution to our friendly neighbouring countries in their hour of great need.

Obviously, natural disasters have done great damage to socio-economic development, as well as to infrastructure and the environment. Millions of people have become homeless. The more vulnerable sectors of society, such as women and children — especially orphans and widows — have been greatly affected. We thank the United Nations and its agencies for their valuable work in providing emergency relief to these victims, as well as their assistance for long-term reconstruction and rehabilitation work.

Recurring natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods and hurricanes pose a great challenge to the international community with respect to peace and sustainable development in the world. Many developing countries, particularly the least developed among them, need technical and financial assistance to strengthen national capacities for dealing with the various stages of natura' disaster response, including prevention, preparedness, mitigation, recovery and reconstruction.

My delegation shares the concern expressed over the inadequate response in terms of financial and technical resources for humanitarian assistance to the victims of natural disasters. We support the efforts of the United Nations to develop multipronged strategies for enhancing national ownership and leadership and strengthening disaster response capacities, including risk reduction and resource mobilization. We welcome the recommendation contained in the report of the Secretary-General (*A/60/432*) on the improvement of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund to include a grant element alongside the existing loan element in

the Fund. We have no objection to changing the Fund's name to the Central Emergency Response Fund.

Natural disasters are among the major obstacles to sustainable socio-economic development in my country. Due to its geographical and geotectonic conditions, Nepal is prone to earthquakes. Major disasters to which Nepal is vulnerable, in addition to earthquakes, include floods, drought, landslides, epidemics, glacial lake outburst floods, fire and ecological hazards. Over the years, my country has suffered great loss of life and property, as well as damage to development infrastructure, as a result of earthquakes and floods.

At the national level, Nepal's 1982 Natural Disaster Relief Act, as amended, sets out the measures to be undertaken for the pre-disaster, preparedness, response and immediate relief, and post-disaster reconstruction and rehabilitation phases. Various institutional mechanisms ranging from the local to the national level have been established. The Central Natural Disaster Relief Committee, headed by the Home Minister, is responsible for formulating policies and programmes and undertaking activities dealing with natural disasters. His Majesty's Government attaches importance to collaborative efforts with United Nations agencies, civil society, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders in carrying out those programmes. The Participatory Disaster Management Programme has helped to create public awareness and strengthen national disaster management capacities.

In addition to natural disasters, terrorist activities in recent years have caused a great loss of life and damage to property and the country's development infrastructure. His Majesty's Government of Nepal is fully committed to ensuring the safety and security of the people and to restoring peace and stability. It has also provided humanitarian relief to internally displaced persons. My delegation urges the international community to provide support to strengthen and complement our national efforts.

Humanitarian assistance aims at lasting peace and sustainable development. The international community should continue its cooperation with the countries affected by natural disasters with a view to strengthening national capacities for providing enhanced emergency relief to victims of natural disasters.

**Mr. Berruga** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation expresses its gratitude for the support and offers of assistance extended by the international community to assist the Mexican communities badly affected by the passage of Hurricanes Stan and Wilma during the present hurricane season.

In the past two years, we have witnessed natural disasters that have caused great losses of life and the destruction of infrastructure. As a sign of our solidarity and taking into account that we ourselves are in the process of recovery, Mexico has made financial and in-kind contributions to support the efforts to assist the victims of the hurricanes in the United States, Guatemala and El Salvador.

Furthermore, I have the honour to announce that my country will actively participate in the donors conference to be held in Islamabad on 19 November. We will shortly make an unearmarked contribution to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for the implementation of humanitarian assistance programmes in Pakistan.

Some 300 million people have been affected by various natural disasters in recent months. Material losses amount to hundreds of millions of dollars. Regrettably, in all those cases, the majority of victims have been among populations with the least resources.

For that reason, we stress the need to redouble our efforts to strengthen strategies for responding to natural disasters, with a long-term perspective and within a framework of a genuine culture of prevention, supported by the promotion of development. Similarly, we attach great importance to risk identification and mitigation, with the highest priority being given to the most vulnerable sectors.

It is essential that we, the Member States of the Organization, try to limit our endless debates on the conceptual framework and return to a more pragmatic debate on fundamental questions such as the establishment of the overall lines of action for the prompt and effective delivery of humanitarian assistance, as well as a coordination strategy involving States, civil society and humanitarian organizations, with the aim of channelling assistance towards a response to real needs and avoiding the uncoordinated flow of resources.

My delegation actively participated in the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, held in Kobe, Japan

in January 2005, and considers that implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action is an excellent basis for achieving the goals that I have just described.

However, it should be noted that all those efforts will be in vain if they are not accompanied by national and global plans for the protection of the environment. Given the irrefutable proof of the link between the growing number of natural disasters and the continued destruction of our environment, we deeply regret the refusal of some States to sign or ratify the relevant international treaties — particularly the Kyoto Protocol — whose full implementation would contribute significantly to the stability of our ecosystem.

Mexico supports the recommendations contained in the reports of the Secretary-General on this item. We reaffirm our commitment to the international framework regulating the provision of humanitarian assistance, in keeping with our guiding principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality and with full respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of States, in conformity with General Assembly resolution 46/182.

However, we note with deep concern the recent tendency to interpret those principles in a way that impedes the access of humanitarian personnel to affected populations when the State exercising jurisdiction over them is unwilling or unable to guarantee that it will fulfil its obligation to protect.

In addition, we are concerned at the selective attention given to the needs of countries experiencing humanitarian crises. We firmly believe that the resources allocated for such emergencies should not be determined by political considerations or by interests inimical to the principles of humanitarian assistance. Therefore, the Mexican Government has adopted a policy of making non-earmarked donations — such as that announced by the representative of Pakistan — to enable United Nations humanitarian entities to provide aid that meets needs on the ground.

In line with that position, my country has actively supported expanding the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, whose strengthening will accelerate the process of the Organization's humanitarian crisis response and provide funding for crises that lack of sufficient resources because of their low political profile. In that regard, I am pleased to inform the Assembly that the Mexican Government is holding internal consultations to determine when we can contribute to the Fund.

Finally, I should like to reaffirm the importance attached by my delegation to the phase of transition from emergency to development. We are convinced that, insofar as we give greater priority to the phases of prevention, reconstruction and institutional strengthening, we will create sustainable conditions for peace and social stability. Mexico therefore supports and is actively participating in the discussions on establishing the Peacebuilding Commission. We hope to see those efforts translated into action as soon as possible, in keeping with the commitment expressed at the 2005 world summit held in September.

**Mrs. Holguín** (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

We thank the Secretary-General for his reports on humanitarian assistance. We congratulate Jan Egeland on his commitment and thank the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for its work. We congratulate the staff of the Office on its commitment and dedication to humanitarian aid.

We wish to reaffirm our solidarity with the victims of the Indian Ocean tsunami, the earthquake in Pakistan and the hurricanes in the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico. The United Nations system has the great challenge of assisting in the reconstruction and in helping to return to normal the lives of the people in the affected areas, working closely with their Governments to consolidate strategies and long-term programmes that will permit effective recovery measures.

Humanitarian assistance must be provided with a deep conviction to work and cooperate with States and to support Governments' efforts to improve their response capacity and infrastructure so that they can better face such challenges. That is the only way to ensure sustainability in dealing with emergencies. Moreover, assistance must be provided in a way that upholds the guiding principles of neutrality, impartiality and humanity.

We must be strict about not politicizing humanitarian assistance and respect its guiding principles. Failure to do so will weaken the system's response capacity, resulting in a loss of legitimacy and

credibility. Elaborating strategies that supplant States and weaken their response capacity will not produce the desired benefits. Creating operative frameworks for specific situations will not be positive for the system. Short-term success must not be confused with sustainability and the capacity to deal with emergencies.

Focusing on needs is important: it ensures that principles are respected and that efficient and effective responses are provided to solve specific problems. The example of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) should be the rule, not the exception, in humanitarian assistance. The ICRC's credibility and legitimacy are due to its decades-long work throughout the world in compliance with international humanitarian law. The United Nations system should profit from those successful experiences.

The Emergency Relief Coordinator has asked that we study his proposal for the Central Emergency Revolving Fund. My delegation believes that efforts to improve United Nations humanitarian coordination deserve consideration and analysis, and that is one of them. The General Assembly must review the proposal without weakening its decision-making capacity in this area. We do not agree that the Assembly should be asked to create new structures and then receive no reports about them later. If it did that the Assembly would continue to lose its management, decision-making and oversight capacities.

The updating of the Fund must be carried out with a view to accountability to the General Assembly, which must guide its work and priorities to ensure that the Fund meets needs resulting from emergencies. Accountability to the Assembly goes far beyond an annual report on the Fund's management, of which we would only take note. We believe that the General Assembly must oversee the Fund's management, and we are prepared to work with other States to find the best way to do that. This is a process that will make it possible to revitalize the General Assembly.

This year has been particularly difficult for humanitarian assistance. My delegation supports initiatives that seek to improve such assistance, ever mindful that the consent and cooperation of States are essential to its functioning.

**Mr. Morote** (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his reports on humanitarian assistance.

My delegation supports the statement made by the representative of Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance.

The Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters indicates that the economic costs of natural disasters have increased fourteenfold since the 1950s, not including losses of human lives. Those disasters should alert us to the magnitude of the humanitarian challenge and to the imperative need for more coordinated and effective action throughout the United Nations system. Such a new attitude must also face up to the Organization's fundamental limitations in terms of the lack of human and financial resources for risk reduction and the need to improve and increase its disaster-relief activities.

In that context, it is important to carefully differentiate among the origins, characteristics, damage potential and mitigation measures for each kind of disaster. There are disasters of a clearly natural origin, such as volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and tsunamis, which cannot be prevented and which constitute only 15 per cent of all disasters. Then there are disasters that are directly or indirectly influenced by humankind and which thus require that we modify our habits of production and consumption and our way of living to prevent them.

Among the damage-potential factors, the strategies that are designed and implemented must take into account the lack of political will, inappropriate development models, deficiencies in governance, inequalities within a population and the growing vulnerability of developing countries, countries in transition and, in particular, countries suffering high levels of poverty, conflict, disease and a lack of medicines and healthcare facilities, among other things.

According to a recent Pentagon report on climate change and security, the environment is now a factor of international stability and security. That affirmation is based on the following conclusions.

First, global warming could lead to an abrupt paralysation of the ocean currents, which would bring more severe winters, a drastic reduction of soil moisture, desertification, intense winds, forest fires, cyclones, more acute El Niño phenomena, torrential

rains, storms, typhoons and floods in certain regions of the world.

Secondly, climate change, whose effects would vary by area and season, would contribute to the loss of biodiversity, affect a significant portion of the world's food production and have a severe impact on energy and freshwater resources.

My delegation wishes to underline the following necessary strategies.

First, we must act in a comprehensive and systematic manner. We must establish timely and unrestricted early warning systems and improve rapid response capacities, taking advantage of local actors close to the disaster site. We must put in place preventive measures, including public awareness campaigns, programmes for disaster preparation, mitigation and recovery and programmes for rehabilitation, reconstruction and the restoration of authority and the rule of law. In addition, we must facilitate sustainable ways of living and create conditions conducive to development. North-South and South-South cooperation must be encouraged, as should the participation of experts and the transfer of technology and practical know-how.

We must define the specific roles and improve the capacities of States, of the United Nations and its relevant bodies, of other international organizations including international financial institutions, of regional organizations, local governments, communities and military personnel, and of experts, non-governmental organizations, private enterprise and the media, among other civil society actors.

Thus Peru proposes that the United Nations adopt the following specific actions.

We must improve our capacity for a rapid and effective response to natural disasters by making adjustments to the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team with respect to damages and needs assessment, and by strengthening the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and the Inter-Agency Task Force for Disaster Reduction.

It is important to strengthen the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) through the provision of adequate material, financial, technical and human resources support for its goal of enhancing the quality and quantity of humanitarian assistance. In that way, OCHA will be able to coordinate assistance to the victims of natural and man-made disasters with greater effectiveness.

In addition, in light of its vast experience and prestige in the area of humanitarian disaster assistance, OCHA should issue annual reports on its activities in natural disaster relief containing an assessment of its experiences and general and specific recommendations.

In that context, I wish to highlight the proposal contained in the report of the Secretary-General with respect to the participation of the private sector in humanitarian emergency response. It is highly relevant and should be given consideration. I am certain that numerous multinational corporations with global business interests would be interested in participating. We could perhaps promote a global compact for disaster assistance between the United Nations and those corporations.

Likewise, we support the recommendation of the Secretary-General regarding an appropriate institutional synergy, through which each United Nations mission, in each country where they are deployed, could function as an integrated entity, thus enabling the Organization to more effectively respond to potential humanitarian crises anywhere in the world.

Peru expresses its support for the establishment of an international humanitarian fund, and for the South Fund for Development and Humanitarian Assistance and the International Recovery Platform. It supports the expansion of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund to include a grants element alongside its existing loans component. We look forward to learning further details of the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a standing global response capacity under United Nations auspices.

Finally, I wish to emphasize the role of the media, which can contribute indirectly to international financing by giving disasters a level of visibility equal to the severity of their impact.

**Mr. Sen** (India): At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for the reports that have been prepared for the discussion under this item. India would also like to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77.

The past year has, unfortunately, witnessed several major natural disasters in various parts of the world. Some have affected India.

The earthquake that occurred in the northern reaches of the Indian subcontinent on 8 October was particularly devastating. Given the magnitude of the human tragedy, as a neighbour and a member of the international community, India promptly conveyed its readiness to extend any assistance, including rescue and relief, that the Government of Pakistan might deem appropriate.

During the meeting on assistance to communities affected by the South Asia earthquake, held in Geneva on 26 October, India also pledged a contribution of $25 million as assistance to the Government of Pakistan for relief and rehabilitation of victims affected by the earthquake. Those funds are being made available by the Government of India to the Government of Pakistan for providing relief to victims, building homes, rehabilitating people and reconstructing the infrastructure and restoring essential services.

The Government of Pakistan is welcome to use those funds for sourcing supplies of building materials such as cement and other items from India. The technology available in India for prefabricating earthquake resistant shelters can also be accessed by means of the fund.

One of the most important proposals for consideration under the agenda item is that of the improvement of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF). We have repeatedly seen that timely and adequate funding of relief efforts in the initial phases is crucial for saving lives and providing assistance to victims of sudden natural calamities.

The report of the Secretary-General (*A/60/432*) analyses the funding shortages faced by the majority of flash appeals, especially in the initial phases of emergency operations. Late delivery of funds constrains efforts to mount a rapid response and to save lives in the early days and months. An improved CERF would indeed make humanitarian funding predictable. Moreover, by allocating one third of the Fund's grant facility to underfunded emergencies, the new Fund is expected to address the needs of countries that do not have the benefit of a "CNN effect".

The report has provided details of funding received in the first month in response to flash appeals during 2002-2005, as a percentage of total requirements in each case. In eight cases the funding received in the first month was less than 20 per cent of what was needed. The report also cites the case of slow onset crises such as the desert locust problem in the Sahel, where timely action would have saved about $90 million later on. We therefore agree with the Secretary-General on the need to improve the CERF and to have it operational by early next year.

It is important that the new CERF continues to operate in accordance with resolution 46/182 and the guiding principles annexed to the resolution. We have noted that the report of the Secretary-General has included a section on the governance of the Fund along those lines. The General Assembly has on numerous occasions, including in the guiding principles of resolution 46/182, stated that humanitarian assistance should be provided with the consent of the affected country and on the basis of an appeal by it. It also emphasizes that humanitarian assistance must be provided in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality. Moreover, coordination of all types of external assistance must be done by the recipient Government, to ensure better coherence and coordination of the relief effort.

While we support the idea of improving CERF, we find that the report fails to outline clear criteria and guidelines for allocation of funds from the new CERF. The report states that the Emergency Relief Coordinator will approve all grants awarded by the Fund in accordance with its overall objectives. In case of competing demands, the discretion would seem to vest with the Coordinator. We feel that detailed criteria and guidelines for allocation of funds need to be developed, with the approval of Member States, so that the Coordinator would need to use discretion only in rare cases. In his annual report to the General Assembly on expenditures made from the improved CERF, the Cordinator should be required to provide justification for such exceptions for consideration of and future guidance by Member States.

The report claims that the modernized Fund will contribute to the realization of other elements of humanitarian reform, including strengthening of humanitarian coordination and response capacity. However, the report does not help us to understand how that would be achieved.

The new CERF has set itself an ambitious target of $500 million. Thus, as compared to the existing arrangement of a $50 million revolving facility, the improved CERF aims to raise $450 million on a yearly basis. It is presumed that contributions made to CERF

would not come at the expense of funding for development activities, but would be new and additional to such funding. Moreover, CERF focuses only on relief activities. The improved CERF would not cover the rehabilitation and reconstruction needs of disaster-affected countries.

While improving the capacity to provide relief in the wake of disasters, there is also a need to examine how the gap between relief and development can be bridged. The Secretary-General, in his report entitled "The transition from relief to development" contained in document A/60/89, has also highlighted the need for adequate and timely funding of transitions to meet enduring humanitarian, recovery and peace consolidation priorities, while simultaneously focusing on building national and local capacities.

General Assembly resolution 59/250, entitled "Triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system", urged the United Nations agencies and donor community, in coordination with national authorities, to begin planning the transition to development and taking measures supportive of that transition, such as institutional and capacity-building, from the beginning of the relief phase.

The resolution stressed the need for transitional activities to be undertaken under national ownership through the development of national capacities at all levels to manage the transition process. There is need to look at the issue of national capacity development and national ownership as a priority in post-conflict situations.

The Secretary-General's report focusing on the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster, contained in document A/60/86, identifies the lessons learned from the humanitarian efforts and key issues emerging from the ongoing recovery efforts in the affected countries. Given the scale of the damage caused by the tsunami last December, the recovery effort would need to continue over a period of time.

General Assembly resolution 59/279, on the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster, has emphasized the need for the international community to maintain its focus beyond emergency relief and to support the medium- and long-term rehabilitation, reconstruction and risk-reduction efforts of the Governments of the affected countries. We fully endorse that approach.

Early warning is a crucial dimension and we are prepared to share our experience in this area with other countries in the region. An early warning system against tsunamis devised by Indian scientists is being set up in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, and is expected to become operational during 2006.

The Secretary-General's report entitled, International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development, contained in document A/60/227, states that it is possible to close the gap between relief and development and transform disasters into opportunities for sustainable development. That is the case when efforts are made, among others, to support local and national recovery processes at an early stage. India is convinced of the need for continuing international engagement in the post-disaster period, for restoring livelihoods, building resilience and reducing vulnerability. We hope that the Secretary-General will focus on meeting that long-felt need, even as we work towards improving CERF.

International cooperation in tackling natural disasters makes us realize once again that the world is one family, as the ancient Indian thinkers had written. This gives life to international solidarity and hope to multilateralism by making that concept a part of the lives of ordinary people. As in the past, India is again coordinating for the Group of 77 the draft resolution entitled "International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development".

**Mr. Boonpracong** (Thailand): My delegation wishes to associate itself with the statements made by Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and by Malaysia on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. My delegation would like to shed light on some issues that are important to my delegation, as Thailand is also a country affected by the tsunami disaster last December.

My delegation sincerely commends the reports of the Secretary-General, which clearly introduce an insight into the obstacles and lessons learned from the humanitarian response effort that come out of the ongoing recovery effort in affected countries. Thailand is well aware that the more challenging tasks which lie ahead are rehabilitation, reconstruction, recovery and prevention of the impact in the aftermath of the tsunami disaster. We have been making the utmost

effort at all levels in order to ensure that the people who have been affected can return to their normal lives as soon as possible.

At the national level, financial and monetary restrictions have been relaxed, among other measures, so as to help to provide local people and entrepreneurs affected by the tsunami with the time and space to recover and restructure their businesses. At the international level, partnerships have been formed with many countries and organizations, as well as with regional and international financial institutions, with a view to providing support to the affected communities and vulnerable groups to help in the restoration of their livelihoods and in the recovery of their economic means of survival and their access to services.

Thailand accords priority to the strengthening of the resilience of local communities in the affected areas. Greater knowledge and understanding among the general public about natural disasters is also important and needs to be reinforced. We have integrated the subject of tsunamis into education programmes so as to ensure that our people are well aware of disaster risk and reduction. We also set up local early warning centres. In addition, the first tsunami evacuation drill was organized in Phuket in April 2005, and more than 2,000 people, including members of the diplomatic corps in Thailand, took part.

The aftermath of the tsunami has brought with it a great and true sense of solidarity in the international community, as witnessed by the outpouring of assistance in all forms and by all actors from around the world. For its part, Thailand welcomes and is committed to the initiative agreed at the Global Consortium for Tsunami-Affected Countries, aimed at improving and ensuring effective coordination and the transparent, accountable and efficient use of the assistance provided for tsunami relief, recovery and reconstruction. We have established an online Development Assistance Database, which provides details on all matters relevant to tsunami relief and recovery, including project-level information on commitments, disbursements, expenditures, donors and implementers, as well as key outputs and information about the progress made so far.

Also at the international level, a tsunami ministerial meeting was held in Phuket, at which initiatives to establish regional tsunami early warning arrangements, as well as a voluntary trust fund on tsunami early warning arrangements in the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia, were agreed. The voluntary trust fund has now been instituted, and is administered by the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific. It is aimed at enhancing national and regional tsunami early warning centres, and complements and forms an integral part of the Indian Ocean tsunami warning system being coordinated by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO. Since the trust fund is voluntary, contributions from members and stakeholders, including international organizations, regional and international financial institutions, the private sector and individuals, are more than welcome.

On 26 December 2005, the Thai Government will be organizing a tsunami commemorative event in honour of those we lost and to express gratitude for the sympathy and generosity we received from around the world. At the memorial service to mark the event, we will lay the foundation stone for a tsunami memorial in remembrance of those who lost their lives. We invite all members to join us in commemorating that particularly mournful day to remember those who lost their lives in the tragedy and to remind us how vulnerable we all are to the forces of nature.

**Mr. Mansour** (Palestine): We are gathered here today to discuss what has been a lifeline for the Palestinian people throughout the past decades of occupation and deprivation. International assistance to the Palestinian people has, more recently, been a vital component of the international community's efforts to make concrete the foothold of stability and peace in the region. That assistance translated the Palestinian people's vision for sustainable development into tangible projects and programmes, which made Palestinians feel that they were not alone and that the world wanted to see a brighter future for their children. Unfortunately, the international community's good will and generous efforts were always confronted by the obstructive nature of the Israeli occupation. Following 38 years of military occupation and the past five years of unabated military aggression, the Palestinian economy now stands in ruins.

After 1967, the Palestinian economy remained hostage to the occupying Power, forced to be completely dependant on it and forbidden from reaching its potential. Palestinian society and the Palestinian economy were neglected and fell decades behind their neighbours in terms of development and

infrastructure. When the Palestinian Authority was formed, therefore, it had to start from scratch. The components of the economy were lacking — starting with basic infrastructure like water and sewerage systems. The task was daunting and the historical responsibility was enormous.

Working hand in hand with the international community, the Palestinian Authority has been able to achieve great progress in many areas, despite the repeated setbacks caused by the occupying Power's concerted efforts to obstruct or disrupt the progress. A litany of pretexts and excuses were used that only translated into the further frustration of the efforts made to enable the Palestinian People to exercise their economic, social and cultural rights, which are a basic constituent of their inalienable right to self-determination. Those Israeli obstructions are also a grave violation of international humanitarian and human rights law as well as signed agreements, in particular the Paris Protocol.

The past five years have witnessed a downward spiral in the Israeli attitude towards international assistance efforts, which has gone from obstruction to destruction. Israel, the occupying Power, systematically destroyed a host of internationally funded infrastructure projects, including the airport, the sea port, roads and water networks and many others. The most conservative estimates put the cost of that destructive Israeli campaign at $3.5 billion. They also estimate that, owing to those Israeli practices, the Palestinian economy lost approximately $6.4 billion in potential income and missed opportunities, bringing total Palestinian losses in the past five years alone to $9.9 billion. That staggering figure far exceeds the overall international assistance received by the Palestinian people between 1994 and 1999, when the projects, now destroyed, were funded. A sizeable portion of that momentous loss was contributed by generous donors represented in the Assembly.

Concurrent with the methodical destruction of infrastructure and public and private property, the occupying Power has implemented a number of collective punishment measures against the Palestinian people, worsening an already dire situation. According to the most recent report of the Secretary-General (A/60/65), Israel, the occupying Power, has enforced a closure regime of over 700 roadblocks and checkpoints that severely restrict the movement of Palestinian persons and goods.

Additionally, the occupying Power has destroyed and confiscated Palestinian land and property that were in the way of the expanding illegal settlements. Also, Israel's wall, deemed illegal by the International Court of Justice in its 2004 Advisory Opinion, has caused untold damage to the Palestinian economy. These practices all have contributed to an increase in the Palestinian people's dependence on international assistance and shifted the emphasis of that assistance from development to relief. Numerous independent international studies and reports, including by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the World Bank, have pointed out that the regressive state of the Palestinian economy and living standards are due to the aggressive Israeli measures I have just discussed.

The international community welcomed Israel's dismantling of settlements and its exit from the Gaza Strip, only to be frustrated by the Israeli practices following the exit. While we also noted that the Israeli exit represented a step towards implementing the road map, we remain disappointed by the situation on the ground thus far. Israel, the occupying Power, continues to close the Gaza Strip's gateways to the world and to the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory, forbid construction work on the Gaza seaport and airport, and attack its towns and neighbourhoods. In fact, Mr. James Wolfensohn, the Quartet Special Envoy for Disengagement, summarized the situation in a letter to the Secretary-General dated 16 October 2005, when he said that the occupying Power "is loath to relinquish control, almost acting as though there has been no withdrawal". Mr. Wolfensohn has also emphasized that there is no hope for economic revitalization in the occupied Palestinian territory if the Gaza Strip and West Bank remain disjoined and the Gaza Strip remains sealed off from the rest of the world.

Despite the dire situation I have just outlined, the Palestinian Authority insists on looking ahead and on working for a brighter tomorrow — one that is marked by freedom and prosperity rather than by occupation and poverty. The international community shares that vision of peace and development with the Palestinian Authority and has supported its achievement by assisting in the implementation of development plans formulated by the Palestinian Authority over the past 10 years.

That shared vision also contributed to the establishment of Palestinian institutions that continue

to work diligently towards being competent and transparent, worthy of serving as a foundation for the future independent State. The Palestinian leadership takes this task and responsibility very seriously, as evident in the continuous reform steps taken, which have been applauded by several international organizations.

The Palestinian Authority has formulated a medium-term development plan. We call on the international community to endorse that plan and to ensure that the plan's projects are funded promptly in order that optimum results may be reached. This should be done in the context of guaranteeing an increase in Palestinian ownership of the process. In that regard, allow me to highlight the Palestinian people's deep gratitude for the international community's continued assistance and support as well as our sincere appreciation for the often selfless work done and sacrifices made by the staff of international aid agencies working in the occupied Palestinian territory.

We also urge the international community to ensure that their generous pledges correspond with the funds disbursed later on, in order to ensure the uninterrupted and successful implementation of the development plan. Additionally, we call on the donor community to give its full support to the United Nations inter-agency consolidated appeals process for the occupied Palestinian territory. It cannot be overemphasized that relief and development efforts in the occupied Palestinian territory should go hand in hand, as both are vital for achieving the desired development goals.

The international community must not allow Israel to continue defying its obligations as an occupying Power through the illegal policies and practices that have led to the state of economic regression Palestine now faces. Furthermore, it is incumbent upon the international community to ensure that the occupying Power does not continue to carry out acts of aggression against the projects it funds and the aid workers it employs with impunity, as these repeated attacks have derailed the development process and frustrated assistance efforts.

Finally, the cause of this state of utter destitution is known to all parties concerned and clearly identified: the continued Israeli occupation. Hence, and as numerous international organizations agree, full economic recovery and rehabilitation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem — the goals driving international assistance — will be possible only when this occupation ends.

**The Acting President:** In accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/2 of 19 October 1994, I call on the Observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

**Mr. Schulz** (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies): On behalf of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), let me express my appreciation for the opportunity to speak on this most important item. We are reminded of its urgency daily as we read the covers of our newspapers and are moved by stories of survival, loss, suffering and hope, from Kashmir to Aceh, to the Sahel and southern Africa, and to the Gulf Coast and beyond.

Indeed, 2005 has shown the dramatic impact that disasters continue to have on lives, livelihoods and hard-won development gains. Climate change, environmental degradation and unsustainable development, coupled with inadequate mitigation efforts, suggest that the number of people and assets affected by disasters will continue to rise. Moreover, as demonstrated by Hurricane Katrina, the vulnerable — notably the poor, the sick, the elderly and the marginalized — pay the largest price, in rich and poor countries alike.

Mark Twain once wrote: "Whenever you find that you are on the side of the majority, it is time to reform." In celebrating the sixtieth birthday of the United Nations, Member States have generated an impetus for change, and the United Nations provision of disaster and humanitarian relief is benefiting from such attention.

The International Federation welcomes efforts to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations. Our eight decades of experience in disaster relief have taught us that effective coordination is the key to success for all. We very much value our close collaboration and coordination with the International Committee of the Red Cross in complex emergencies, where armed conflicts and natural disasters combine their destructive forces. No single organization can tackle the increasing challenges posed by disasters. We

must first and foremost work together for the benefit of all.

The Federation also welcomes the strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief of the United Nations as a trusted partner of the United Nations system. While our humanitarian principles prompt us to work independently and with the utmost neutrality, we value our cooperation with United Nations Member States and recognize that coordination with United Nations agencies, funds and programmes adds to our effectiveness.

At the national level, Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are recognized under the law as auxiliaries to their Governments. Internationally, the International Federation collaborates with United Nations bodies on activities of joint interest. Our coordination with the United Nations at Headquarters and at the field level is further enabled by our relationship with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and by our standing invitation from the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. A few examples of our collaboration can be found in Southern Africa and the Sahel, where we distribute food with the World Food Programme; in the Caribbean and Central America, where we prepare annually for the hurricane season through joint contingency planning; in tsunami-affected countries, where we work with the United Nations Development Programme to elaborate coherent disaster management plans; and at Headquarters, where we are active members of the Global Consortium on Tsunami Recovery.

Reform provides many opportunities. The Federation welcomes the decisions set forth in the outcome document of the 2005 world summit, and supports efforts to ensure greater predictability of humanitarian action, funding and access. We would like to provide just a few comments thereupon, while also noting our support for the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council, and our hope to continue playing a constructive role in this forum. The cluster approach, which aims to improve the predictability of humanitarian action by organizing coordination on a sectoral basis, is being utilized for the first time in response to the South Asia earthquake. So far, it appears that the new approach has helped to identify common challenges and sectoral gaps and has focused relief on meeting humanitarian needs — and not on the work of any one agency alone.

At the same time, however, the cluster approach may have made a holistic response to disasters more difficult — and possibly even detracted attention from other disasters, such as the devastation caused by Hurricane Stan in Central America. We believe that those mixed results will need to be assessed when the critical emergency phase is over. The Federation also welcomes efforts to strengthen coordination of relief provided by the United Nations at the field level, by strengthening the roles of the humanitarian and resident coordinators. While the Federation operates in an independent manner, it coordinates its work closely with the United Nations and specifically with the humanitarian coordinator.

Most important, however, the Federation supports efforts by countries to strengthen their own capacities to prepare for and respond rapidly to natural disasters and to mitigate their impact. That is not only at the centre of our work as auxiliaries to those Governments and at the heart of our philosophy to mobilize the power of humanity, it is also based on recognition that improved national and local capacities enable coordination of national and international humanitarian actors alike. The development of regional structures, such as the Pan-American Disaster Response Unit and the regional disaster response team have proven equally successful in helping us respond to the hurricanes in Central America and to the South Asia earthquake.

The Federation welcomes United Nations efforts to improve the predictability of humanitarian funding, including the creation of a Central Emergency Response Fund. The Federation's own fund, called the Disaster Response Emergency Fund, helps us to immediately deploy resources to respond to disasters, even before donors assess their ability to pledge any support. The Federation hopes that the Central Emergency Response Fund will bring additional resources, and not cause the reallocation of funds from other important programme areas. We also hope the Fund will provide particular support for neglected and sudden-onset emergencies, and equally for neglected — but most essential — programming, such as disaster preparedness.

Paradoxically, there is a continued lack of adequate funding for preparedness. It continues to be easier to mobilize support for post-disaster responses than for preparedness and mitigation activities that could avoid the loss of life and the destruction of vital

assets. Disaster preparedness has, for a long time, been a core activity of the Federation, and as such, we very much welcome the United Nations focus on developing a culture of prevention.

We believe that strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief must be done holistically, as is disaster management itself. That means that coordination must be strengthened during all phases, from response, to recovery, to preparedness, and on to development. As we have stressed before, preparedness and a culture of prevention are keys to effective relief. Coordination structures must therefore be set up before a disaster occurs, and also be formed to specifically build disaster preparedness and early warning systems.

Through their network of volunteers, Red Cross and Red Crescent societies participate in the development of multihazard early warning systems. These are not slumbering systems; they encompass the ensemble of activities that strengthen the resilience of communities. Volunteers translate warning signals into a suitable language for wide dissemination and community response. Because effective humanitarian and disaster relief depends equally on sustainable development, coordination should span the medium- and long-term phase as well.

The Federation actively cooperates with the United Nations on progress towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Partnerships with the World Health Organization to address measles and malaria in Africa and with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) to reduce stigma and discrimination of people living with HIV/AIDS are good examples of this.

The Federation also sustains recovery efforts during the long-term when needed, as evidenced by the ongoing work of the Chernobyl Humanitarian Assistance and Rehabilitation Programme, 19 years after the disaster. The Federation has maintained its coordination with the United Nations throughout this time, and is a prominent member of two United Nations initiatives, the International Chernobyl Research and Information Network and Cooperation for Rehabilitation of living conditions in Chernobyl-affected areas in Belarus, which seek to promote sustainable development of regions affected by the Chernobyl disaster. The Federation very much welcomes and looks forward to adoption of draft resolution A/60/L.19, on Chernobyl.

We believe that to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief, coordination must be inclusive of a myriad of actors. Naturally, national authorities lead that coordination effort with the possible support of the United Nations system and other international organizations. Of almost importance, however, is for coordination to include affected communities, capturing their roles as first responders and capitalizing on their resilience.

Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, with their expertise in disaster response, extensive reach into vulnerable communities, and auxiliary relationships with Governments, are ideal partners for Governments to that end. Early engagement with national societies at the national and local levels, as well as ongoing support at the community level on a wide range of activities, from reducing greenhouse gases to planning for evacuations, can greatly improve collaboration and results during the relief effort.

To conclude, opportunities for positive change are within reach. As a partner and in the name of our shared beneficiaries, the Federation supports efforts to strengthen the coordination of United Nations humanitarian and disaster relief. Indeed, we consider that to be one of the Assembly's most important priorities. Our staff and volunteers remind us daily — as does the President of this Assembly — that success is measured in our actions, and notably in our ability to alleviate human suffering. Mindful of the very realities outside of this Hall, we thus urge Member States to give consideration to the wide-ranging impact of such reform.

**The Acting President**: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 48/265 of 24 August 1994, I now call on the Observer of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta.

**Mr. Shafer** (Sovereign Military Order of Malta): I should like to express my gratitude to the President of the General Assembly for his good work in directing the deliberations of the present session.

The Sovereign Military Order of Malta has more than 80,000 humanitarian volunteers who carry out an ever-growing number of life-saving and livelihood-restoring programmes around the world. Our volunteers are motivated by one goal, powerful in its

simplicity: to alleviate human suffering. The obstacles to the successful achievement of that mission are numerous. Therefore, the Order of Malta works actively, in partnership with United Nations agencies, States and local and international non-governmental organizations, to further strengthen a coordinated response to those challenges.

Humanitarian aid workers throughout the world are often the first to respond to crises in the most unsafe areas and the last to remain long after financial support has ebbed. It is that very dedication and tenacity that makes them uniquely vulnerable to acts of violence and persecution.

That regrettable fact is conveyed in the 2005 report of the Secretary-General on safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel (*A/60/223*), which reports an increase in the number of security incidents involving United Nations staff. The most significant dangers to personnel continue to be physical attacks, threats, robbery and theft.

These numbers are more than just statistics to the courageous field personnel of our Order. In early August of this year, Mohammed Idrees Sadiq and Emal Abdul Samad — two local staff members of the Order — were killed in an ambush in south-eastern Afghanistan. The two men had been working to support the return and reintegration of refugees, the building of local income-generating measures and the efficient development of infrastructures as part of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

As an active partner in a number of United Nations peacekeeping operations, the Order of Malta is deeply concerned for the protection of all humanitarian personnel. Allow me to observe that adequate measures for the protection of all humanitarian personnel could be included in the Security Council's mandates. We must neutralize the threats facing humanitarian personnel so that they can continue to actively improve the lives of those in distress.

In the wake of both man-made and natural disasters, it is imperative not only that humanitarian assistance provide immediate relief to victims, but also that comprehensive relief systems be developed to carry out tasks including mitigation, prevention and reconstruction. The Order is convinced of that fact and has demonstrated its ability to make the transition from immediate relief to long-term development in many contexts, not least the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster in December 2004. The Order had personnel on the ground in the first days following the disaster, working cooperatively with other organizations and the local communities to provide medical care, water and vital goods for survivors in India, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Indonesia.

When the need for emergency relief subsides, organizations with the necessary capacity can make a seamless transition to reconstruction and development. In affected countries, the Order buys goods locally to limit transportation costs and strengthen the local economy, providing a sustained impetus towards self-help. Projects with timetables of progress stretching from three to five years in the future are planned and carried out in close consultation with national authorities, ensuring the Order's lasting and meaningful assistance.

Before concluding these remarks, I should like to say a few words about the Order's humanitarian activities to provide assistance to the Palestinian people. The Order of Malta has operated the Holy Family Hospital of Bethlehem-Palestine for 15 years. The hospital has just celebrated its thirty thousandth healthy delivery, despite having been besieged and damaged as a consequence of the violence in the area. The Order remains committed to the development of a sustainable health system for the Palestinian people.

I should like to assure the Assembly that the Order is responding daily to the challenges presented by humanitarian work. We will continue to follow closely the leadership and initiatives of the United Nations.

**The Acting President**: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 45/6 of 16 October 1990, I now call on the observer for the International Committee of the Red Cross.

**Ms. Petitpierre** (International Committee of the Red Cross): It is a great pleasure to address the community of nations on this topic, which is both timely and of great importance. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is fully committed to humanitarian coordination. It strives to tie its activities to the real needs of people affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence, but it certainly cannot meet all such needs, and it does not claim to do so. United Nations agencies are among the most important partners in that endeavour.

I would like to stress three elements related to humanitarian coordination: first, the effort to improve humanitarian coordination through reform of the United Nations humanitarian system; secondly, the need to meet the humanitarian needs of internally displaced people; and thirdly, situations of transition.

The ICRC welcomes the United Nations process of reforming the humanitarian system. Any such process will ultimately lead to more effective and more reliable humanitarian response where it counts most: in the field, among people affected by disaster or conflict. That is true of the United Nations humanitarian system, and it is true of all humanitarian networks. The ICRC will continue to participate in the process — notably as a standing invitee of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and in situations of armed conflict and internal strife — in its role as lead agency for relief operations involving the other component of the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement.

We are willing to play an active role in efforts to improve complementarity and interoperability among the United Nations system, the Red Cross and Red Crescent network and the community of non-governmental organizations. That could be done, for example, by developing common criteria for assessing needs and measuring impact, by establishing clear arrangements among humanitarian organizations regarding the geographic and thematic division of roles, and undertaking measures to facilitate cooperation among the United Nations Joint Logistics Centre, the ICRC and other logistics centres.

We cooperate with the United Nations humanitarian system, to the extent that such cooperation is compatible with our responsibility, so that we can always act as a neutral and independent intermediary and carry out our strictly and exclusively humanitarian activities. For that reason, the ICRC does not take part in United Nations integrated missions. It must remain in a position to respond to the most immediate needs at the onset of a crisis and to maintain its autonomous operational capability to intervene anywhere within 48 hours of the outbreak of an emergency.

The ICRC firmly believes in complementarity among humanitarian organizations. But it also believes in a pluralistic approach whereby various agencies perform various roles according to their respective comparative advantages. The ICRC's specific comparative advantages are its neutral and independent approach, its operational capacities in the field and its proximity to people in need. While genuinely engaging in dialogue with humanitarian agencies, the ICRC will also preserve its confidential bilateral dialogue with State and non-State actors.

The fate of internally displaced persons is one of the main topics addressed through this reform process. I would like to emphasize that internally displaced persons are protected by international humanitarian law. Those who are living in situations of armed conflict are primarily civilians, and as such are protected by international humanitarian law, which provides for civilian immunity from attack and abuse and also sets forth the explicit right of civilians to receive the assistance essential to their survival.

The needs of internally displaced persons are very diverse. The ICRC is fully aware that responding to that wide range of needs demands the commitment of many bodies and organizations. Again, close coordination with other agencies is the best — indeed, the only — way to meet the needs of all those who have been made to flee their homes and forced to settle, temporarily, in makeshift dwellings, eagerly awaiting their return home.

We are, of course, aware that, unfortunately, the term "temporarily" can mean anything, from a few days or months to years, or even decades. Such drawn-out situations are all-too frequent, and situations of transition today are the rule, rather than the exception.

This brings me to my third point. Transition is a particularly sensitive phase characterized by a high level of uncertainty as to how a situation is going to develop – whether there will be lasting peace or new conflict. It may therefore be necessary to extend relief operations beyond the immediate post-war situation to ensure that there is no gap between the phasing out of humanitarian action and the phasing in of development programmes. Development agencies may have to delay their activities for security reasons or because financial resources have not yet been committed or cannot be disbursed.

It is the ICRC's hope that the planned Peacebuilding Commission will be able to remedy that situation and find lasting solutions, allowing communities that have suffered from the scourge of war to recover in dignity and look to the future with confidence.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the importance of this momentum, which comes almost 15 years after the fundamental resolution adopted by the General Assembly on the strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations. This year has witnessed many initiatives, from different sources, to improve the humanitarian system. The ICRC sees this debate as essential, and will continue to play its part in it. Profoundly convinced of the continuing necessity to bring a better humanitarian response to those in need, we will do our utmost to pursue and deepen our privileged relationship with United Nations agencies. At the same time, we will constantly ensure that we preserve our own identity, for the good of the victims whom we all strive to help.

**The Acting President:** In accordance with General Assembly resolution 47/4 of 16 October 1992, I call on the Observer for the International Organization for Migration.

**Mr. Dall'Oglio** (International Organization for Migration): The International Organization for Migration (IOM) welcomes the opportunity to take the floor today on the very important topic of the effective coordination of humanitarian assistance efforts. As an active member of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the IOM regards the IASC as the principal mechanism for the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance and as a model of partnership among United Nations humanitarian agencies, other intergovernmental bodies, the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement and the non-governmental organization community.

Another key coordination element of the humanitarian community is the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP). The IOM recognizes the CAP as a strategic planning and programming process, not just a resource mobilization tool. We have gradually expanded our participation in that vital process. Final preparations are currently ongoing for the global launch in 2006, and we expect to take part in seven appeals out of a total of 12 CAPs.

*The President returned to the Chair.*

Strengthening coordination among different humanitarian agencies requires us to take into account the changing nature of various emergencies and the evolution of the participating agencies themselves. Reform and innovative approaches are periodically needed. The IASC has recently endorsed a cluster approach in nine key areas of intervention as a means to achieve stronger leadership, support and accountability. These, in turn, are expected to improve the predictability, timeliness and effectiveness of the humanitarian response to crisis. The cluster approach was field tested for the first time during the inter-agency response to the devastating earthquake in South Asia, most notably in Pakistan. In responding to that emergency, IOM has been tasked with the role of cluster leader in the area of emergency shelter and is working in active cooperation with other agencies to provide tents and other shelter options through Operation Winter Race. We believe that that coordination effort is bringing the first positive results, and we are committed to its effectiveness.

Clearly, such efforts require timely and predictable funding if they are to succeed. In this connection, IOM welcomes the initiative being taken by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to propose an upgraded Central Emergency Revolving Fund. Facilitated and streamlined access, as well as the introduction of a grant facility, are important improvements which will help to front-load urgently needed funds and improve the capacity for quick response.

The humanitarian community has been confronted in the past year with natural disasters of unusual — if not unprecedented — magnitude and frequency, epitomized by the Asian tsunami and, more recently, by the earthquake in South Asia. The growing human, social and financial impact of natural catastrophes has been identified as a clear and — at least in the short term — irreversible trend, which can be addressed only by reinforcing preparedness and disaster-mitigation measures, as clearly spelled out in the Hyogo Framework for Action.

The IOM's humanitarian intervention in response to natural disasters encompasses assistance to populations displaced by such events. Studies conducted some years ago indicate that 25 million people had been forced to migrate owing to environmental disasters. Such disasters can trigger irregular migration as people are suddenly uprooted from their homes and forced to flee, either internally or to neighbouring countries, thus increasing the impact of such movements. People fleeing natural disasters are often separated from their families and have a high risk of contracting diseases owing to the breakdown of

social structures, including loss of access to health care. Furthermore, let us not forget that in the aftermath of such events the potential for trafficking in separated or orphaned children may increase.

For all those reasons, we believe that such migration movements not only deserve a prompt, coordinated response in the short and medium term, but that that they also must be fully taken into account within the Hyogo Framework.

In addition to numerous devastating natural disasters, humanitarian agencies have continued to address a number of man-made crises. IOM has high expectations as to the decision taken at the recent world summit to create a Peacebuilding Commission aimed at enhancing the international community's capacity to support war-torn societies, so as to avoid a relapse into conflict and to create conditions for sustainable peace. We believe that the activities of the Peacebuilding Commission will have strong implications for humanitarian agencies active in post-conflict scenarios, and we look forward to establishing an open and fruitful cooperation with the Commission.

Allow me to conclude my remarks by reaffirming the value that IOM attaches to its participation in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and our support for the ongoing collaborative efforts, including those I mentioned earlier, made by the Emergency Relief Coordinator to promote a shared environment for the attainment of key humanitarian policies and goals.

Finally, we wish to take this opportunity to renew to Under-Secretary-General Jan Egeland and to his team at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), on behalf of IOM's Director General, our sincere appreciation for the professionalism, dedication and inclusiveness they have demonstrated in their collaboration with our organization.

**The President**: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 54/195 of 17 December 1999, I now call on the Observer for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.

**Mr. Bhagwat-Singh** (International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources): The item under consideration before the General Assembly today is of great relevance and importance. I wish to commend the Secretariat for having prepared such comprehensive reports on the subject under review.

The world has witnessed natural disasters of growing magnitude over the past few years, which have resulted in heavy losses of life and serious damage to the environment and to biodiversity, and subsequent long-term damage to the affected areas.

The response by Governments, United Nations bodies and the public sector to all those disasters has been prompt, appropriate and very generous. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), by nature of its composition, has played a significant role in early relief and rehabilitation and in recommendations for long-term environmental management. IUCN has a proven ability to mobilize its members — 82 Governments and more than 100 non-governmental organizations, as well as hundreds of practitioners and scientists, for a common cause. It also has the infrastructure, through regional, national and project offices in 62 countries, to coordinate national and cross-regional activities.

Immediately following the tsunami disaster, IUCN, with its regional staff, collaborated with all of the organizations involved in the immediate relief, rehabilitation and recovery efforts. We have had a series of meetings with the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery and have submitted to him our proposals regarding the restoration of ecosystems in the Indian Ocean. We have stressed in particular the importance of the mangrove system in buttressing coastal areas against environmental degradation. In South Asia, mangroves, coastal forests and wetlands have declined in both surface area and in terms of their composition, and there is ample evidence that fish stocks and other endangered marine species are also declining or fast disappearing.

IUCN has a large presence in South Asia, and our staff in the region was quick to respond to the destruction caused by the recent earthquake. Apart from the enormous and tragic loss of life, there has been great damage to the environment, particularly to forests. Forest products are critical to the survival of disaster victims in the coming winter, and the need for shelter, firewood and wood for reconstruction has resulted in a new threat to the surviving forests. It is essential that measures be taken to manage the forests in a sustainable manner, for the benefit both of the earthquake-affected people and for future generations.

IUCN will be transmitting a comprehensive version of this statement electronically to all Missions. Meanwhile, we wish to assure delegates of IUCN's continued collaboration and involvement in the support for medium- and long-term rehabilitation, reconstruction and risk-reduction efforts in order to alleviate the effects of future natural disasters.

**The President**: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 73 and its sub-items (a), (c) and (d).

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolutions A/60/L.18 to A/60/L.20.

Before we proceed further, I should like to consult the Assembly with a view to considering draft resolutions A/60/L.19 and A/60/L.20 at this meeting. In that connection, since the two draft resolutions were circulated only earlier today, it would be necessary to waive the relevant provision of rule 78 of the rules of procedure.

The relevant provision of rule 78 reads as follows:

> "As a general rule, no proposal shall be discussed or put to the vote at any meeting of the General Assembly unless copies of it have been circulated to all delegations not later than the day preceding the meeting."

Unless I hear any objection, I shall take it that the Assembly agrees with this proposal.

*It was so decided.*

**The President**: In connection with draft resolution A/60/L.18, I should like to give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

**Mr. Botnaru** (Chief, General Assembly Affairs Branch): I should like to inform representatives that, in connection with draft resolution A/60/L.18, I wish to place on record the following statement of financial implications on behalf of the Secretary-General.

By operative paragraph 6 of the draft resolution, the General Assembly

> "Requests the Secretary-General to appoint a special envoy in order to, inter alia, sustain the political will of the international community to support medium- and long-term rehabilitation, reconstruction and risk reduction efforts".

The resources that would be required in connection with the appointment of the special envoy would be financed exclusively from extrabudgetary resources. Therefore, should the General Assembly adopt draft resolution A/60/L.18, there would be no financial implications for the regular budget.

I should like to inform members that the title of draft resolution A/60/L.18 on the reissued version that was distributed in the General Assembly Hall earlier this afternoon should read: "Strengthening emergency relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and prevention in the aftermath of the South Asian earthquake disaster — Pakistan". The title will be reflected in the final version of the draft resolution.

**The President**: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolutions A/60/L.18, A/60/L.19 and A/60/L.20.

Draft resolution A/60/L.18 is entitled "Strengthening emergency relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and prevention in the aftermath of the South Asian earthquake disaster — Pakistan". There is a list of additional sponsors, which I will read out: Andorra, Angola, the Bahamas, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Eritrea, Guyana, Iraq, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malta, the Marshall Islands, Mongolia, Nepal, Serbia and Montenegro, South Africa, Tajikistan and the United Arab Emirates.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/60/L.18?

*Draft resolution A/60/L.18 was adopted* (resolution 60/13).

**The President**: We now turn to draft resolution A/60/L.19, entitled "Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster". Additional sponsors are the following: Angola, Bangladesh, Iceland, India, Malta, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea, Slovakia and Spain.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/60/L.19?

*Draft resolution A/60/L.19 was adopted* (resolution 60/14).

**The President**: We now turn to draft resolution A/60/L.20, entitled "Strengthening emergency relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and prevention in the

aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster". There is a long list of additional sponsors: Afghanistan, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Belgium, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Bulgaria, Cape Verde, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Djibouti, Estonia, France, Grenada, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, India, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Madagascar, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mongolia, Morocco, Nicaragua, Norway, Oman, Poland, Qatar, Samoa, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovenia, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Tuvalu, Ukraine, the United States of America and Zambia.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/60/L.20?

*Draft resolution A/60/L.20 was adopted* (resolution 60/15).

**The President**: Before calling on representatives who have requested to speak in exercise of the right of reply, I remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Ms. Oron** (Israel): As I listened to the statement of my Palestinian colleague, I realized to my regret that I was hearing the same recording that I have heard so many times in the past. Unlike the situation in Israel and the Palestinian territories, which has dramatically changed during recent years, my colleague's statement employed the same rhetoric, omissions, factual inaccuracies and crude generalizations.

Although the Palestinian observer may want the Assembly to believe otherwise, the situation has changed over the past years. Despite violence and despair during the intifada, there was a peace process prior to it, during which the two sides signed international agreements and the Palestinian Authority was created. Less than a year ago, new hope was created when Prime Minister Sharon and Chairman Mahmoud Abbas met in Sharm el-Sheikh and when both expressed a commitment to a peaceful settlement according to the road map.

This past summer, Prime Minister Sharon took a bold and courageous move by disengaging all troops and civilians from all of the Gaza Strip and parts of the northern West Bank. Furthermore, constructive negotiations are currently taking place over transferring control of the Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt. What has not changed, however, is the unwillingness of the Palestinian Authority to confront terrorism and fulfil its first obligation under the road map, to dismantle the terrorist infrastructure and collect arms.

Palestinian terrorists continue to kill Israeli civilians and fire Qassam rockets onto Israeli towns and cities. There have been more than 26,000 terrorist attacks perpetrated against Israeli targets during the past five years. There should be no doubt about the impetus for those attacks. They were carried out with the sole intention to murder, targeting as many children, women and men as possible.

Neither side has a monopoly on suffering; nor can either side fail to assume their commitments. I invite my Palestinian colleagues to discontinue unhelpful rhetoric and utilize the current momentum for peace. Israel will further elaborate on that subject when the General Assembly takes action on the relevant draft resolution.

**The President**: I call on the observer of Palestine.

**Mr. Hijazi** (Palestine): It is easy to use red-herring arguments, as the Israeli representative just did, in order to divert attention from the indisputable information presented about the grave violations of international law that we referred to earlier in our statement. The fact remains that until and unless Israel halts its military campaign against the Palestinian people, Israel will be held responsible for its practices.

Furthermore, the systematic destruction of the Palestinian people's infrastructure and all their development projects, as well as the deprivation of their sovereignty over their land and resources, are the direct result of a clear policy adopted by the State of Israel, the occupying Power.

The Israeli representative referred to the withdrawal from Gaza. The exit, though significant in that it set a precedent, was 38 years too late and was done in a manner that left the Gaza Strip and its 1.3 million inhabitants prisoners, denied access to the rest of the world and to the other parts of the occupied Palestinian territories. Furthermore, I would like to

remind the Israeli representative of a point that her Government often conveniently omits from the discussion on the Gaza Strip exit, and that is that Israeli occupation forces continue to maintain effective control over the Gaza Strip by land, sea and air.

The Gaza Strip was left in ruins and is now experiencing the effects of never-before-used Israeli weapons, including artillery rounds. Gaza residents have been violently shaken out of their sleep, as their windows shatter from the effects of repeated sonic booms over their skies at intensities never experienced before. That imprisoned population is now also held hostage and terrorized.

Numbers and figures in this conflict are a powerful identifier of the aggressor and the aggressed-upon. It is interesting that the Israeli delegate chose to bring up numbers and figures, since she must know that her occupying forces have, over the past four years alone, killed more than 4,000 Palestinians, including 682 children. The delegate, no doubt, also knows better than all of us the exact figure, totalling into the tens of thousands of rounds of ammunition, artillery and rockets weighing up to 1,000 kilos, that the Israeli occupation forces have used against Palestinian population centres. We invite her to share that figure with us.

It is only when Israel, the occupying Power, puts an end to its occupation, and with that, an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people for 38 years now, that the international assistance would be fruitful and attain its desired and noble goal.

**The President**: In the course of today's debate, speakers referred to the unprecedented number and scale of disasters during this past year, and we have also heard the views of Member States on the follow-up to the Chernobyl disaster. I have taken note of the views of delegations for a special meeting of the General Assembly in that regard.

I am glad that speakers have underlined the importance of humanitarian principles, as enshrined in resolution 46/182, as well as in the world summit outcome document. I also note the praise for the selfless work undertaken by the humanitarian workers around the world, under difficult conditions, and especially the appeal for their free and unhindered access to areas struck by disaster and devastation.

The envisaged transformation of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund was generally welcomed during this debate. At the same time, the view was expressed that it is also important to consider resources from actors not traditionally considered to be humanitarian actors, such as the private sector and civil society. The necessity of the predictability of humanitarian aid and assistance was stressed, together with the importance of follow-up to the pledges made at donor conferences and better monitoring of humanitarian assistance by way of an institutionalized mechanism. A similar mechanism has also been requested in other fields of development.

As President of the General Assembly and former Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, I very much appreciate the fact that most speakers expressed appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Jan Egeland for his important work and the work of his staff, and I support the expressed need for the further strengthening of capacity-building within the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. In the same vein, more needs to be done to strengthen the system-wide coherence and coordination of United Nations efforts in the humanitarian field. Here, countries' expertise and the involvement of regional organizations are of great significance.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that although we have finished today's debate, we are not closing this very important item. I would like to recall the important work to which I referred earlier — aimed at the security and safety of humanitarian personnel — that is still going on in the Second and Sixth Committees and elsewhere in the United Nations system. This debate has, in my view, reminded us of the importance of the humanitarian imperative. It has also reminded us that that imperative requires action: action in the field to save and improve the lives of millions of vulnerable fellow human beings.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (c) of agenda item 73?

*It was so decided.*

**The President:** The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 73 and its sub-items (a) and (d).

**Agenda item 42 (*continued*)**

**Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations**

**Draft resolution (A/60/L.17)**

**The President:** Members will recall that the General Assembly held the debate on agenda item 42, jointly with agenda item 43, at its 35th and 36th plenary meetings, on 20 October.

I give the floor to the representative of Mongolia to introduce draft resolution A/60/L.17.

**Ms. Enkhtsetseg** (Mongolia): I have the distinct honour to introduce draft resolution A/60/L.17, entitled "Eight hundred years of Mongolian statehood", on behalf of the sponsors listed in the document: Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, France, Germany, Greece, Haiti, India, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Luxembourg, Malawi, Monaco, Morocco, the Philippines, Qatar, the Russian Federation, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Turkey, the United States of America and my own country, Mongolia. In addition, I am pleased to announce that since the publication of the draft resolution, the following countries have joined the list of sponsors: Australia, Canada, Iceland, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Oman, Romania, Slovenia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkmenistan.

Civilizational achievements constitute the collective heritage of mankind. Embracing such action and working to achieve an objective understanding of all civilizations are of special significance for enhancing constructive interaction and cooperative engagement among all civilizations. Yet a rich and diverse civilization created by nomadic peoples across the globe — most notably on the vast expanses of the Euro-Asian steppe — as so far received litt!e attention within the overall framework of the global agenda aimed at dialogue among civilizations.

Nomadic civilization has existed mostly in peaceful symbiosis with sedentary societies and has played an important role in the development of extensive trade networks and in the creation of large administrative cultural, religious and commercial centres. Studies indicate that the nomadic peoples of Arabic, Finnish, Mongolic, Turkic and other origins have significantly influenced societies throughout the world. Their mobility has been instrumental in making possible the free flow of ideas across regions, thus contributing to the shape of the modern world.

Indeed, nomadic civilization has served for thousands of years as a bridge between world civilizations. The culture of living in harmony with nature, which is inherent in nomadic civilization, allows the preservation of the delicate ecological balance of natural habitats. This ability of nomads to adapt to nature's whims has a heightened validity today against the backdrop of current environmental threats and challenges.

Mongolia is a nomadic State. My nation's traditions, values and culture, as well as its very mentality and self-identity, stem from its nomadic roots. Mongolia is also an ancient country; it will celebrate the eight hundredth anniversary of its statehood next year. As my President said from this rostrum at the September summit, "Anniversaries provoke recollections over the past and projections for the future" (*A/60/PV.5, p. 27*). Therefore, the eight hundredth anniversary provides us with an opportunity not only to look back at the legacies of our forefathers, but also to take up more closely the study of nomadic civilization.

Accordingly, the draft resolution now before the Assembly has two main themes that are intricately intertwined and mutually reinforcing. First, it seeks to reinforce the concept of dialogue among civilizations, bringing the role and contribution of nomadic civilization into the global agenda. It also reaffirms the importance of preserving and developing the centuries-old traditions and culture of nomadic peoples in modern societies. In addition, it seeks to encourage renewed interest in studying various aspects of nomadic civilization on the part of relevant international organizations, civil society and academia, thus contributing to mutual understanding among civilizations and cultures.

The draft resolution also acknowledges the centuries-old statehood of Mongolia, welcomes the efforts of my Government to celebrate its eight hundredth anniversary next year and invites Member States, the United Nations, other organizations, academia and civil society to take part actively in the events to be organized in celebration of this anniversary.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to express its wholehearted gratitude and appreciation to all our

fellow sponsors for their valuable support and solidarity. On their behalf, we express our confidence that the draft resolution will command the broadest possible support of the Assembly and that it will be adopted by consensus.

**The President:** The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/60/L.17, entitled "Eight hundred years of Mongolian statehood".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/60/L.17?

*Draft resolution A/60/L.17 was adopted* (resolution 60/16).

**The President:** May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 42?

*It was so decided.*

*The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.*